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ABSTRACT

Papers from a conference on the teaching of grammar, particularly in second language instruction, include: "Grammar: Acquisition and Use" (Richard Johnstone); "Grammar and Communication" (Brian Page); "Linguistic Progression and Increasing Independence" (Bernardette Holmes); "La grammaire? C'est du bricolage!" ("Grammar? That's Hardware!") (Barry Jones); "Grammar in Classroom Interaction" (James Burch); "Welsh for Beginners" (Geraint Hughes); "Awareness of Language" (Eric Hawkins); "Grammar and the 'Less Able' Learner" (Patricia McLagan); "Tenses: A Learner's Experience" (Christiane Montlibert); "GCSE to 'A' Level" (John Thorogood, Betty Hunt); "Information Technology: Use and Abuse" (Pam Haezewindt); "Grammar in a Coursebook: A Writer's Perspective" (Barry Jones); "Grammar in the MFL National Curriculum" (Mary Ryan); and "Percept Before Precept" (Eric Hawkins). Appended materials include criteria for evaluating higher-level writing and a collection of activities using information technology for grammar instruction. A list of references is included. (MSE)

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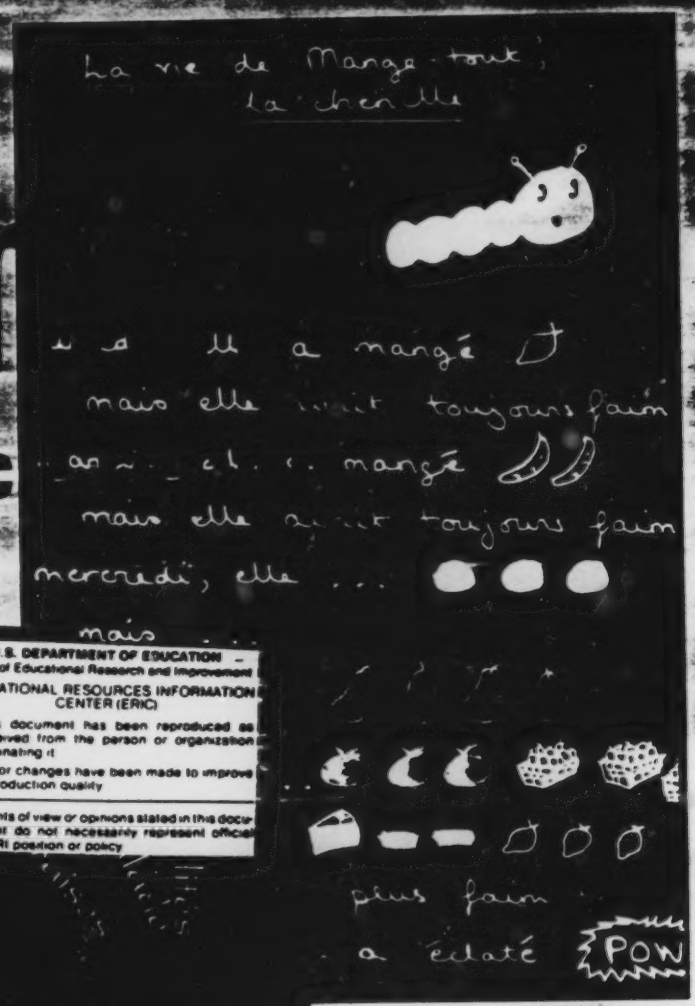

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CiLT

Grammar!

A conference report

Edited by
Lid King and Peter Boaks

CiLT

The views expressed in this book are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of CILT.

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The editors wish to thank all of the participants in the Lane End 'Grammar!' conference, whose perceptive, good-humoured and occasionally perplexed comments provided the stimulus and framework for this book.

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Introduction

Mad slaves and chocolate ice cream

Lid King

For those of us whose initiation into language learning took place in the cold and dusty classrooms of the 1950s, it may appear perverse to devote sun filled days to the examination of **grammar**. What else was grammar for us than the rote learning of unusable syntax:

> *If you had wanted to understand you would have listened, but you did not so you will not.*

and obscure but strangely plangent phraseology:

> *The mad slaves are baptising the camel?*

Had we not learned as young teachers in the 70s and early 80s that all such meaningless formality was a failed orthodoxy to be consigned to the dustbin of educational theory?

And yet we found as teachers that our new orthodoxies did not always succeed. Many of our pupils remained as tongue-tied as we ourselves had been when faced with a real - and not invariably sympathetic - native. Instead of mad slaves we gave them endless baguettes and chocolate ices. Yet neither the slaves nor the ice creams appeared to provide a guarantee of success in foreign language speaking. It all seemed more complicated than that.

Seeking to bring clarity to some of these complications, in May 1993 CILT organised a conference entitled *Grammar!*. The aim was to bring together experts in language teaching theory, practising teachers and those involved in syllabus design to exchange experiences, sum up and, if possible, chart a way forward. This book is the fruit of that conference.

Raising the issues

One of the first issues to be addressed was an historical one. Why was Grammar on the agenda again in the 1990s? The answer was only partly provided by the renewed significance given to questions grammatical (or, as we more hesitantly whispered, 'structural') by the National Curriculum orders. This, too, was a response to a more generalised feeling expressed in different ways by many teachers that somehow the communicative revolution had undervalued the importance of structural understanding.

It may well be argued (see Chapter 2) that there is no contradiction between communicative and grammatical competence; nevertheless, the suspicion

remains that much of our practice does indeed demonstrate such a dichotomy. We have seemed to offer a choice: on the one hand learners can correctly translate '*mad slaves*' (into Greek) and conjugate the verb '*to baptise*'; on the other, they can successfully buy a chocolate ice cream (but do little else).

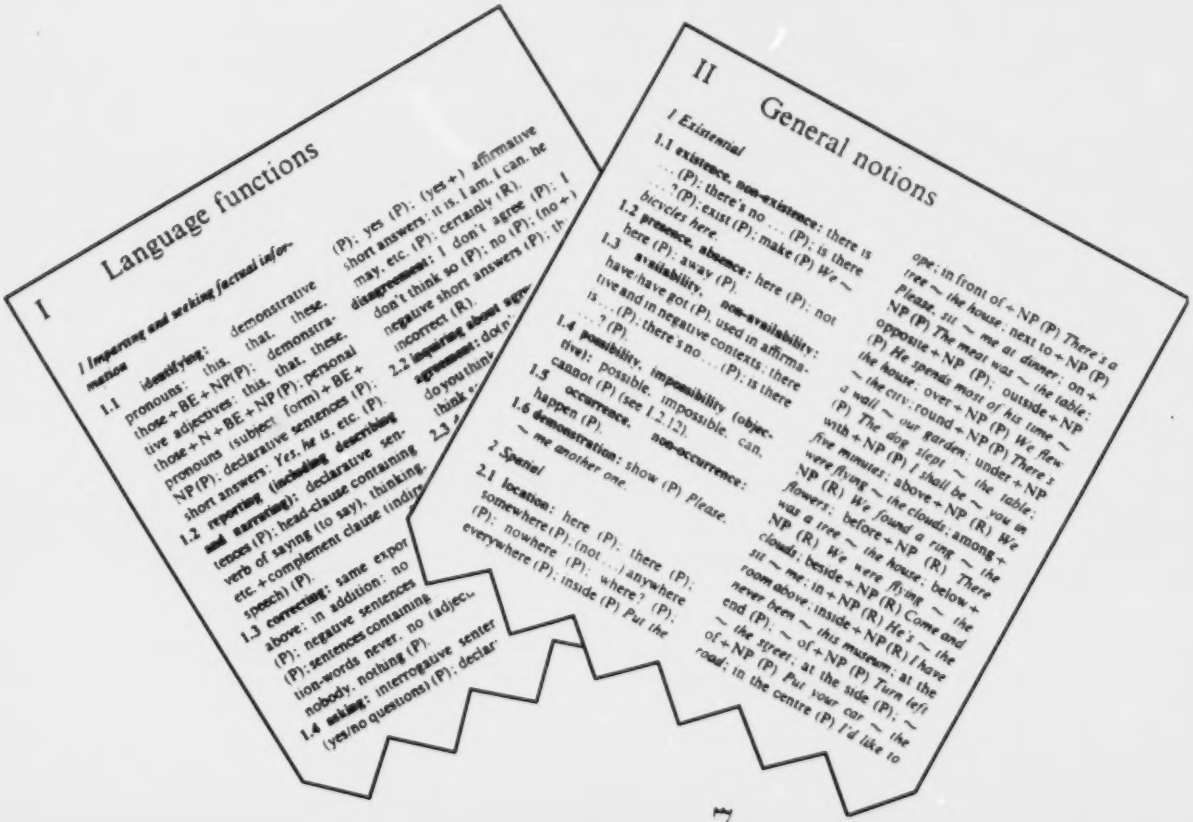
This historical question is further developed in the pages that follow by Richard Johnstone (pp 9-13) and Eric Hawkins (pp 109-123). It immediately confronts us with a range of questions related to definition. '*It all depends what you mean...*' may well provide an easy escape route for the cornered academic. In the case of grammar and language teaching it is also a necessary source of clarification. What indeed are we talking about?

A question of definition

In her recent Pathfinder on grammar, *Grammar matters*, Susan Halliwell outlines and explains four common usages of the term:

- Grammar as description;
- Grammar as terminology;
- Grammar as rules;
- Grammar as patterns.

By **Grammar as description** she means the way language is categorised, whether this is the traditional focus on form - lists of verb conjugations and the like - or the more recent concentration on function (for example the notional and functional lists of the Council of Europe).



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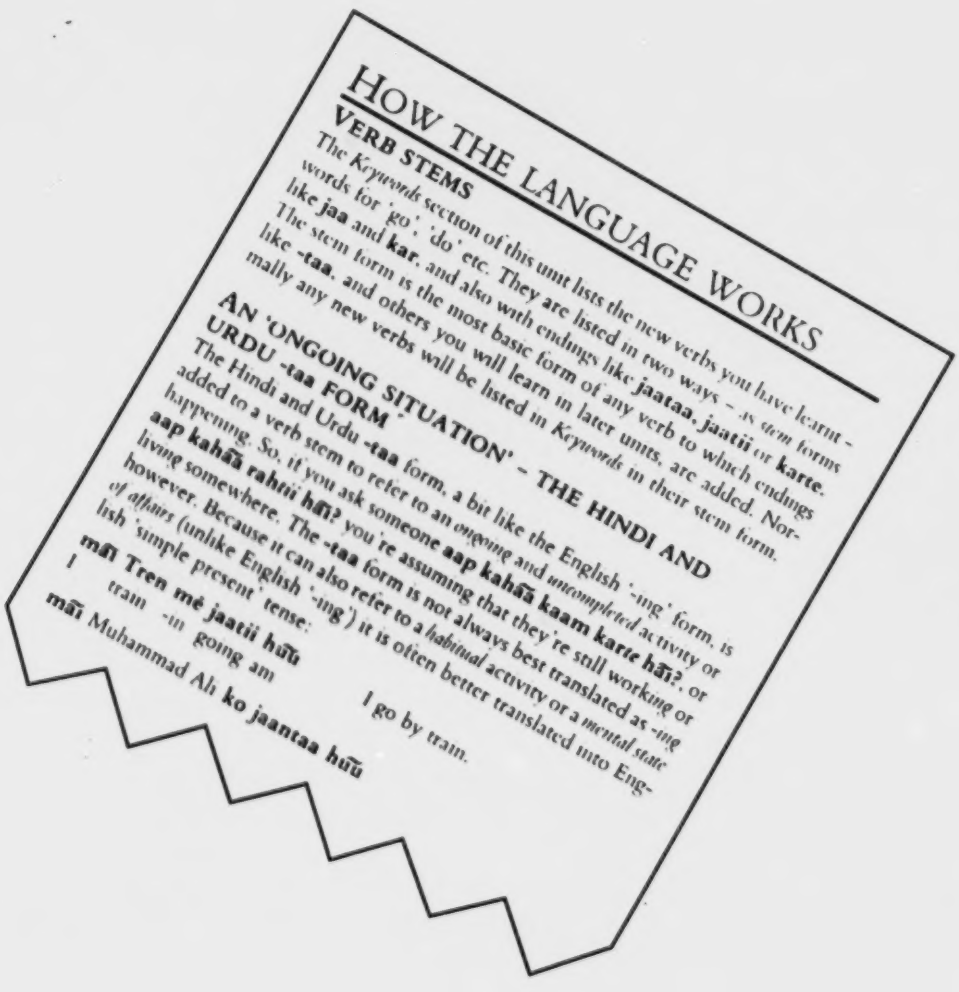
Closely related but not identical to this 'descriptive grammar', is the common use of the word to encompass the actual **terminology** we use to talk about language - *noun*, *verb*, *imperfect subjunctive*, etc. Very often it is this kind of 'grammar' which is meant when we say such things as:

These kids don't know any grammar.
(translated 'they don't know the terminology of formal grammar')

Grammar as rules is probably the closest to the kind of grammar that we ourselves experienced as language learners. It is the basis of the 'grammar/translation' approach to language learning (or to paraphrase the title of Eric Hawkins' chapter - 'precept rather than percept' - see pp 109-123). It implies a codification of language intended to assist the learner to acquire rules which can then be applied in a range of new situations:



HOW THE LANGUAGE WORKS

VERB STEMS

The *Keywords* section of this unit lists the new verbs you have learnt - words for 'go', 'do' etc. They are listed in two ways – as stem forms like **jaa** and **kar**, and also with endings like **jaataa**, **jaatii** or **karte**. The stem form is the most basic form of any verb to which endings like **-taa**, and others you will learn in later units, are added. Normally any new verbs will be listed in *Keywords* in their stem form.

AN 'ONGOING SITUATION' – THE HINDI AND URDU -taa FORM

The Hindi and Urdu **-taa** form, a bit like the English '-ing' form, is added to a verb stem to refer to an ongoing and uncompleted activity or happening. So, if you ask someone **aap kahãã kaam karte hãĩ?**, or **aap kahãã rahtii hãĩ?** you're assuming that they're still working or living somewhere. The **-taa** form is not always best translated as **-ing** however. Because it can also refer to a *habitual* activity or a *mental state of affairs* (unlike English '-ing') it is often better translated into English 'simple present' tense:

mãĩ Tren mẽ jaatii hũũ
I train -in going am
I go by train.

mãĩ Muhammad Ali **ko jaantaa hũũ**

Grammar as pattern may be seen as a more modern, perhaps learner-friendly version of the traditional rules. It is almost certainly the most generalised way of treating grammar in the current range of textbooks, as reflected in the now almost ubiquitous grammar chart:

Haben Sie	**einen** Stadtplan?
Möchten Sie	**einen** Prospekt? **eine** Broschüre?
Was gibt es hier zu sehen, bitte?	
Es gibt Sie haben	**den** St Johanner Markt. **die** Ludwigskirche. **das** Museum.

Meine Lieblingsfilme sind Ich sehe am liebsten	Krimis. Komödien.
Western Lustige Filme	kann ich nicht leiden. hasse ich.

Following the discussions at the Lane End Conference, we would certainly want to add to this list another, more all-encompassing characterisation of grammar, which is to do with the actual learning process of internalising a language system. In Richard Johnstone's words:

> *Without grammar control, whether based on implicit or explicit knowledge, there can be little if any systematic creativity or accuracy in language use.* (p 10)

It is not then a matter of pedantry to seek to clarify our use of terms. To return to the phrase quoted above, '*these kids don't know any grammar*' could mean simply '*they don't know what preterit means*' or, rather more seriously, '*they are incapable of generating any language*'. The conclusions of each diagnosis would self-evidently be vastly different.

At the very least a more careful use of words may help us to avoid the kind of dialogue of the deaf which has sometimes characterised the debates of recent years. How many of us have listened to one side (the 'Communicators') criticising the 'grammatical' approach as outmoded, stilted and ineffective while the other (the 'Grammarians') laments pupils' inability to be creative or accurate in language use? The dialogue has continued using similar terminology with different meanings, and leading to neither communication creation, nor in some cases accuracy.

Approaches, solutions and problems

If our central concern is the one raised by Richard Johnstone - how do learners internalise grammar rules - then already the discussion has a wider scope than might at first thought be apparent. It is to do with the ways in which different learners learn and the frameworks which help them to do so successfully. To this extent the discussion is not so much about grammar as a set of rules but about language acquisition and language teaching. We hope that the articles which follow will illuminate at least some part of this enormous topic.

We have addressed it by examining a number of strands which reflect the themes and discussions of the conference. There are the general issues relating to language acquisition and the place of grammatical understanding both in current theory and historically. These are considered by three of the seminal figures of contemporary modern language teaching in Britain - Richard Johnstone and Eric Hawkins whom we have already mentioned and

Brian Page whose contribution raises central concerns about the relationship between communication and accuracy.

The practical core of the book is contained within Section 2. Based on the 'experiential' sessions at the Conference, these contributions should enable readers to reflect on the way that learners acquire language and on the strategies which teachers may adopt in order to provide opportunities for the all important systemisation of language referred to by Richard Johnstone.

In the third section we focus more on actual learners and the methods and materials which practising teachers have found useful in developing grammatical awareness. Significantly, examples have been found from a wide range of ages and levels of ability - from primary to post-16 and from the less able to 'A' level. Since 'grammar' is seen as something quite fundamental to language learning, its importance is not confined only to one sector or type of learner. We would not pretend that these chapters provide anything like a comprehensive programme for grammar teaching or acquisition, although Eric Hawkins' article on language awareness puts forward one such programme. Rather, we have aimed to indicate the range of existing possibilities and experiences.

Finally, in Mary Ryan's contribution, an attempt is made to relate these questions to the practicalities of actual teaching programmes and the realities of the school curriculum. However important the discussion of ideas, it is also part of our purpose to assist teachers in the actual implementation of change. For this we need not only clarity in our thoughts and understanding but also an appreciation of planning and systems. It is our hope that both elements will be integrated in the following pages.

There is no single answer given in conclusion to the discussion, and nor should one be expected. However, throughout the different strands described, a number of key questions emerge which are assessed from differing angles. These questions include not only the fundamental questions of definition already outlined, but other key concerns such as:

- How does grammatical understanding aid communication?
- Are there different 'grammars' for different purposes?
- When and how should grammar be made explicit?
- Is there an intrinsic contradiction between 'teaching grammar' and 'use of the target language'?
- What kind of support is needed for successful learning?

It may be that the reader will find it helpful to keep such questions in mind while reading what follows - just as the conference participants were constantly returned to the same central themes as they argued, debated and discussed in their groups. Many of the key thoughts, questions and indeed uncertainties of those group discussions are distilled in the following pages. In particular, we have borrowed from the notes of the discussions to provide a kind of written brainstorm at the beginning of each section. This, too, may help the reader to orientate his or her thoughts, as well as give something of the flavour of this very creative conference.

But not quite finally

The last word is given not in fact to Mary Ryan but to Eric Hawkins. At the conference Eric actually spoke first on his theme of 'percept before precept'. In the book this contribution comes last. This is not mere perversity. It partly reflects the fact that this book is a synthesis of the ideas put forward at the conference, including the ideas contributed by the participants themselves. If it is to be successful the book will take the form of a journey - starting from a hypothesis, or rationale, it passes through experience and example to reach the realities of classroom teaching.

It is at the end of this largely 'experiential' journey that we think it most appropriate to take a longer view and reflect on the historical rather than absolute nature of teaching theory.

In a second sense, too, it is appropriate to end our book with Professor Hawkins. For many of us his work has been central to our thinking about language teaching. During the past 30 years no-one has better represented the humanity, wisdom and essential optimism of the language teaching profession. If they have any merit, the following pages are dedicated to all those who have contributed to the debate, but to no-one more warmly or deservedly than to Eric Hawkins, the perennial 'gardener in a gale' whose ideas may now be more relevant to our concerns than they have ever been.

SECTION 1
A rationale for grammar

We don't want to go back to the past - but we need to move on from here. ◆ Do we give pupils the idea that pidgin communication is enough? ◆ How do we change pupil attitudes to accuracy? ◆ How far is L2 like L1 - when do we take short cuts? ◆ Communicative grammar - is it possible? ◆ Do learners need cognitive awareness? Do they have it re English? ◆ We want confident speakers AND accuracy. ◆ Grammar has a social as well as functional/communicative impact on the interlocutor. ◆ How do you teach grammar in TL? ◆ Pupils need to generate their own personal language as early as possible. ◆ We are at a turning point. How do we organise a middle way which enables grammar to be taught but keeps the learner on board? ◆ Do we underestimate the complexity of the cognitive or instinctive choices learners need to make in order to construct language? ◆ Will grammar help raise standards?

Our starting point is an attempt to provide not only a rationale for the importance of grammar control for language acquisition but a framework within which to place some of those key questions listed in the introduction and exemplified in later sections of the book. How indeed does grammatical understanding aid communication?

In their different ways, both Richard Johnstone and Brian Page examine the relationship between grammatical and communicative competence. In doing so they raise some fundamental issues, in particular the potential effect of current use of authentic texts as a source of raw language. The question is thus posed - should we be thinking about a differentiated grammar, for example a grammar for comprehension and a grammar for production?

Chapter 1
Grammar: acquisition and use

Richard Johnstone

Ever since foreign language teaching began, there has been debate concerning the most appropriate ways of enabling learners to acquire a system of rules that will enable them to use the language purposefully, appropriately, creatively and accurately. At the start I should emphasise that grammar rules are only part of this rule system. In respect of grammar, however, a generation or so ago the debate centred on the relative merits of cognitive code-learning (grammar-translation) and audio-lingual approaches. The results (Smith, 1970) were inconclusive, not only because there was no clear superiority in learner performance of one approach over the other, but also because it was not established that teachers in fact used these approaches consistently and exclusively in their teaching. Real teaching was more messy and pragmatic and could not be reduced to one conceptually pure method.

Since then, of course, there has been enormous interest in communicative language teaching, and it is fair to state that in the initial phases of the development of communicative methodology explicit grammar teaching has had a lower profile. Recently, however, the role of grammar in language teaching (both L1 and L2) has once again become a matter of debate, not only among interested professionals but also across many different sectors of the wider public.

Current interest in grammar

I think there may be two major reasons for the current resurgence of interest in grammar.

First, there is undoubtedly a widespread feeling, supported by evidence from research, that the approach introduced throughout the 1980s, based on communicative methodology and graded objectives, though successful in many respects, has not been without its attendant shortcomings and anxieties. Hurman (1992) for example points out that 'A' level students, who two years previously had gone through a modern GCSE syllabus, were considered by their examiners at 'A' level to have performed probably more fluently and confidently but less accurately than 'A' level students of previous years who had progressed via the more conventional and formal 'O' level syllabus.

Second, a major change is taking place in the ways in which learners are exposed to a foreign language, and this has consequences for the grammar that they must learn. Gone are the days in which they were exposed to nothing but artificially contrived texts. For some time now texts have been

much more authentic, containing a wider range of vocabulary and structure, often of the sort that does not fit easily into a progression of language elements as set out in a coursebook. Even more recently, there has been increased exposure to spoken language on TV/video and to written and spoken language on computer, sometimes within a resource-based approach. This puts increased responsibility on learners themselves to find their own ways of processing the input to which they are exposed. To this end it is essential that they should acquire an understanding of the system of words and rules that underlies the language they are learning. Otherwise, they will at best be able to extract the gist at a fairly superficial level. Significantly, this points to the importance of learning grammar for comprehension, whereas in the past the heavy emphasis has been on grammar for production.

Other factors influencing performance

Before we go further into the teaching and learning of grammar, however, we should bear in mind that there are many other factors that influence the success or otherwise of a language teaching programme. Among these are the ethos of the school and the department, the quality of teaching, the precise role that the language plays within the school curriculum, the attitude of parents and the wider community, the amount and distribution of time made available for learning, the quantity and quality of available resources and perhaps above all the range of opportunities that learners receive for being exposed to the language in and out of class and for interacting with those who speak it. It is also widely recognised, as indicated above, that L2 learners require more than grammatical competence. Canale (1983), for example, lists strategic competence, sociolinguistic competence and discourse competence alongside grammatical competence as components of communicative competence.

Nonetheless, the internalisation of rules must always be central to any discussion of L2 teaching and learning. Without grammar control, whether based on implicit or explicit knowledge, there can be little if any systematic creativity or accuracy in language use. A key question then must be: How do L2 learners best internalise a system of rules that enables them to be creative and accurate? Is it fundamentally the same process for all learners at all times, or does it vary from individual to individual according to age, aptitude and other factors?

Conscious and unconscious knowledge of rules

Reflecting on our own experiences as L2 learners we can readily acknowledge that to some extent we acquire the language naturally and unconsciously as a result of attempts to use it, and to some extent we learn it consciously. What is not clear is the relationship between these two processes. All L2 researchers acknowledge it is possible for learners consciously to learn rules of grammar, and most accept that this is helpful to them in non-spontaneous communication, i.e. in many different acts of reading and writing and in some acts of speaking, such as giving a prepared talk. There is considerably less agreement on whether conscious learning of grammar helps learners internalise the system of rules required for instantaneous, spontaneous communication in spoken language.

Through his 'no interface' hypothesis, Krashen in Krashen and Terrell (1983), for example, asserts that natural acquisition and conscious learning

are two completely different and unconnected processes, that natural acquisition enables learners to internalise the rules they need for spontaneous communication, while conscious learning mainly serves the much more limited purpose of enabling them to monitor what they or others produce. Although by far the best-known exponent of this view, Krashen is by no means alone. Recently there has been much discussion among L2 researchers concerning what it is that triggers the development of an L2 rule system. They accept that (as in L1 acquisition) it can be triggered by PLD (primary linguistic data), i.e. interaction with real contextualised input, provided that the learner is intent on understanding. There is less certainty concerning the roles of EPE and ENE, i.e. Explicit Positive Evidence (as when a teacher explains and exemplifies a new rule) and Explicit Negative Evidence (as when a teacher corrects mistakes that learners have made). In one of the most prestigious journals on second language research, for example, Schwartz and Gubala-Ryzak (1992) claim strongly that it is PLD alone that works.

Other researchers, however, e.g. Green and Hecht (1992), take a more open view and allow a role for explicit grammar teaching. Hawkins and Towell (1992) suggest that when learners have reached a certain stage in their development, conscious learning may seep through into the domain of unconscious acquisition, thereby connecting the two processes. For my part, I think it makes sense for teachers to impose the traditional Scottish verdict of 'not proven' on the 'no interface' hypothesis and to assume it will help their students if they receive lots of exposure to the L2 and lots of opportunities to use it (PLD), are invited to discuss its structure and are given positive explanations and examples of this (EPE) and at appropriate times have their mistakes pointed out (ENE).

Fluency and accuracy

There remains a very interesting question as to whether fluency should be promoted before accuracy, or after, or at the same time. Probably most advocates of a communicative approach have favoured fluency first, with production gradually being refined over time towards more accurate and wide-ranging control, but some researchers (e.g. Hammerly, 1992) strongly favour the reverse. That is, they advocate slow, accurate production gradually being speeded up to become more fluent and wide ranging. They argue that if learners attain premature (inaccurate) fluency, their language may fossilise at that level and they may have great difficulty in making it more accurate thereafter. The relationship between fluency and accuracy then is one that merits further research. Meanwhile, rather than putting one clearly before the other, I would favour alternating systematically between the two, so that within each unit of work there were times at which fluency was the aim and other times where accuracy was more important.

Comprehension and production

Let me return to the matter of grammar for comprehension and grammar for production. The process of production begins with an intention in the mind of the speaker who then seeks vocabulary and structure to express this intention. The process can be largely under the speaker's control because they can use vocabulary and structure that they already know, and if they don't know it they may possibly have recourse to gesture, facial expression and other non-verbal tactics. The process of comprehension works in reverse, from expression to intention. That is, the listener attempting to

comprehend begins by attending to another person's expression (that is, their vocabulary and structure) and has to work out what the intention is. The process is less under the listener's control because they are dealing with the vocabulary and structure of the other person, some of which may be new to them (very likely, if the other person is a more advanced L2 speaker than they are, such as their teacher).

Grammar for comprehension then is likely to differ from grammar for production in two ways. First, it will probably be more wide-ranging and developed; second, it will require careful attention on the part of the listener, since it will be a basis on which the listener will work out what the speaker means. It will make sense then for learners from an early point to be taught a wide range of grammar for comprehension, even though much of this may not be used for production for some considerable time. It will make less sense for their grammar to be limited to that which they need for their own production - yet this is precisely the assumption on which at present many course materials are based.

Role of first language

In discussing grammar in L2 teaching, it is not possible to avoid considering the role of L1. It has been widely assumed that learning an L2 will help learners gain a better understanding and command of their L1. This may be true in some cases, but I believe that the influence works more strongly in the reverse direction. That is, learners who have acquired a sound command of their L1 will be more likely to make good progress with their L2 than will learners who are still struggling with their L1. In this, literacy in L1 appears to be particularly important. If children can read and write in their L1 well, then inevitably they have learnt something important about what language is, how it is composed and how it works. Cummins (1984) and several others after him claim it is possible to develop a surface fluency in L2 without very much reference to L1 but that a more cognitive command of L2 normally depends on a prior cognitive command of L1, which in turn is dependent on the acquisition of L1 literacy. In other words, if children at primary school learn to read and write really well in their L1, this will develop their powers of thinking in L1 and their awareness of what language is and does, which in turn will make it possible to them in due course to get beyond a surface fluency in L2. If on the other hand they struggle with L1 reading and writing through primary school, there is not much reason to believe they will develop more than a surface fluency in L2 spoken language.

The final thought I have to offer is that we should not automatically equate grammatical correctness with high ability. All other things being equal, it is probably fair to assume that learners with higher aptitude will produce utterances that are more grammatically correct than the utterances of learners with lower aptitudes. But in two senses all other things are not always equal.

Creativity

First, it depends on how creative the utterance is intended to be. If a learner simply produces a series of known, prefabricated phrases, then a fairly high level of grammatical accuracy is likely. If on the other hand the learner is really trying to express some new thoughts, then more mistakes are likely. It becomes important then, particularly when administering assessments, to ask oneself how creative or otherwise the learner is attempting to be.

Contextual variability

Second, quite apart from the learner's intention to be creative or otherwise, there are several factors in any given context that will be likely to influence the level of grammatical control that the learner achieves. For example, the context may require spontaneous communication, or it may be one in which a fair amount of pre-planning is possible. It may be one in which the learner is under pressure, or it may be one in which the learner can feel relaxed. It may be one in which there is a lot of visual, non-verbal support, or it may be one in which all communication must take place through language. It may be one in which fairly trivial, staccato conversation is appropriate, or it may be one requiring a more extended, demanding discussion. It may be one in which the learner is familiar with the topic of the conversation, or not. There are many other contextual variables such as these that will impact on the grammatical control that the learners achieve. In other words, a particular level of grammatical control is not a static and predictable characteristic of each particular learner, regardless of context. On the contrary, it may vary quite considerably according to how creative the learner wishes to be and to the particular factors in the context in which the learner is operating. We must therefore exercise some caution in ascribing too much validity to assessment frameworks, national or otherwise, that assume a consistent level of grammatical control in any given learner.

Chapter 2
Grammar and communication

Brian Page

The view that a communicative approach to language learning meant you didn't have to bother about the grammar was always wrong. What is certainly true, however, is that a communicative approach puts a different value on grammar and therefore entails a new definition of what constitutes a mistake. In the old 'O' level prose translation days we could easily tell our learners what their mistakes were - they were grammatical errors. Even mistakes in vocabulary were judged less harshly than a failure to make a verb or adjective agree.

Under that regime, the message - *you run quick big tiger he come* - failed miserably in spite of being crystal clear, a totally successful communication about the nature of the danger and the course of action to take to avoid it.[1] Nowadays we are more enlightened and have marking criteria which reward efficient communication. Those of the NEAB GCSE in French are typical (see Appendix 1, p 124). Under this regime the letter of thanks (opposite) which my son received after an exchange visit would get high marks, probably nine or ten out of twelve. We now have a different way of telling our learners what their mistakes are - they are language which is so garbled as to fail to communicate.

Efficient communication and defective grammar

All this is right and proper. Language is for communication and efficient communication of the message must be given high marks. However, it does leave us with another problem that so far has not been resolved. The tiger message and the letter both communicate efficiently, but neither would have been written by a native speaker of English. It could be argued that, on those grounds, they are not English at all. This is what has been called the *me go sleep now* problem. If we are teaching language for communication what do we do about *me go sleep now* which communicates perfectly?

For a long time the difficulty has been masked by a totally spurious argument. It has often been said and still continues to be argued that the reason for learning grammar and getting the forms of the language correct is to make communication more efficient. The less grammar you know, the less likely you will be able to communicate; the more grammar you know, the more efficient will be your communications. The examples I have given show this argument to be without foundation. It is clearly possible to make communications which are totally efficient in language which is

1 For a more complete version of the tiger story see B Page, *What do you mean... it's wrong?*, pp102-103 (CILT, 1990).

Hello

It's me Jean Noel, excuse me if I'm in late,
but I couldn't write you before, because I have a lot
of homework, and since I'm come back to England
I'm very tired, and this month I pass exams in
my academy school music, everybody at school
are very stretched.

Here wer are very pleased of ours travel in England,
and often with Andre-Marie, Claude, Dennis, Eric
and the girls, we remember, and we hope that
everybody come to France this year.

I was very pleased to be in England, because
at your house, that was very sympathetic, and
say at your parents thanks for all, and I hope
that if a day during a travel you come near
my country, you try to see me.

At my ~~house~~ home, when I come back of England,
My parents, My aunt, My grandmother, asked
me some questions about England, it was very hard,
I think, that I'll ~~became~~ going mad.
I hope that all the family is well, and that
all the young English people is well too.

a big squeez press at Everybody

See you soon A Friend Jean Noel

Original text was handwritten but difficult to read. This transcript keeps same spelling, line length, layout, etc.

grammatically highly defective. A careful distinction must be made here. These grammatically imperfect messages are not wholly defective - there is some grammar there even if it is only the correct word order. We are therefore driven to the conclusion that grammar falls into at least two parts. There is a small amount which is essential for efficient communication and there is the rest. It is an urgent subject of research to find out what that small amount is.

What is correct grammar for?

We are then faced with quite a dramatic question. If the greater part of grammar is not necessary for efficient communication, what is it for? Our failure so far to answer this question has led us into a classic two-horned dilemma. On the one hand we have no convincing answer to give to our learner who says: if communication is the name of the game and getting the gender of a noun wrong does not hinder communication, why do I have to get it right? And on the other hand, the altogether proper feeling we have that *me go sleep now* is not a legitimate final objective for language teaching,

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however communicative it is. We cannot really justify teaching French, German etc which is not recognised by native speakers as being an acceptable version of their language. What we need is a communicative value for correct grammar. The NEAB criteria, good as they are, are typical in not resolving the difficulty. In the Accuracy category, the first three positive criteria (1-3), all concern the effect of grammatical errors on the efficiency of the communication. The fourth criterion then adds an element which concerns correct grammar per se unrelated to communication: '*There are very few ... grammatical ... inaccuracies*'. This implicitly tells the learner: '*you must get it right because you must get it right*' and that, to my mind, is not enough. If our learners are to be encouraged to surmount the difficulties of producing grammatically correct language as well as communicating efficiently, we have to give them a good reason.

A communicative value for correct grammar

We do not know what correct grammar is for, but we do know what effect it produces. It creates in the mind of the hearer/reader an image of the speaker/writer which conditions the response. Faced with someone who produces utterances like *me go sleep now* a sympathetic native speaker (how necessary and useful that concept is!) would use very simple words, a preponderance of single nouns and verbless sentences, clear slow speech with exaggerated pronunciation and much stopping to check comprehension. With the speaker of *you run quick big tiger he come* one could afford to be more relaxed as long as standard speech was used without slang, regionalisms or jargon and a delivery that was reasonably slow and regular. In this way, for assessment at GCSE, for example, the NEAB could define a set of criteria in terms of interlocutor behaviour on the same pattern as those already used. The answer we would give to our learners then would be: if you don't want to sound rather limited and sometimes be treated as if you were a bit stupid, then you need to go beyond *me go sleep now*. If you want to be able to get a job abroad or work here in a job with foreign contacts, you will need to have language accurate enough for people to take you seriously.

There are two dangers to be aware of. First, we must not go back to a situation where grammar predominates again and learners go through endless series of meaningless exercises in order to learn correct forms. Second, we must never undervalue *me go sleep now*. It must continue to be properly rewarded in its own right for what it undoubtedly is - an efficient communication. After all, many of us would be quite pleased if we were able to operate at that level in, say, Chinese or Hungarian. However, we do need to be able to justify teaching and rewarding in communicative terms *I think I'd like to go to bed now if you don't mind*.

SECTION 2
Language acquisition and teaching strategies

Can we remember how we learned grammar? ◆ Should we tell them or show them - tell them later if at all? ◆ The introduction of grammatical points is driven both by the requirements of the communicative task and by the learner's own needs and style. ◆ Communicative need is a priority - traditional sequences can be ignored at early stages. ◆ Tactile element very important - games, touch, colour, shape. ◆ Importance of constant recycling. ◆ Learners often want to see and spell a word in order to process it themselves - they make their own rules. ◆ Language: a jigsaw. ◆ Role of implicit grammar in recognition, intensive practice, reinforcement. ◆ Is grammar via target language appropriate at both implicit and explicit stage? ◆ Teaching is linear, learning is not. ◆ Importance of fun. ◆ Is not acceptable grammar also important for social interaction and credibility? ◆ Is recognising patterns enough?

The range of thoughts, queries and tentative judgements recorded in our opening 'brainstorm' may suggest that this section - the practical core of our investigation of Grammar - will offer no single solution or path. This apparent lack of certainty should not be taken as a necessary sign of muddled thinking. As Richard Johnstone has outlined, much of the research on which we could base a comprehensive theory of the role of grammar and language acquisition is itself inconclusive - or in his terms 'not proven' (p 11).

It would therefore seem prudent to base our practice on a rather more provisional and indeed eclectic rationale than might have been the case in other more self-assured times. Such recourse to the 'provisional' may indeed seem like practical and rather common sense to those of us who have drunk from the chalice of more than one 'potion magique' during our language teaching careers. It is certainly reflected in the thinking behind at least two of the articles which follow.

One of the key points to emerge from these descriptions of approaches to language learning and teaching is the extent to which learners themselves devise explanations for the patterns with which they are confronted - the 'provisional rules' described by Bernardette Holmes on page 19 and by Barry Jones on page 35 and which may indeed be not dissimilar to James Burch's 'learner instinct'.

This observation, based both on the experience of learners and teachers and the attempts of researchers to synthesise such experience, is clearly one key element in any more comprehensive approach to language acquisition. If we accept it as a working hypothesis then clearly this has implications both for the roles of teacher and learner and for the discussion about 'explicit' and 'implicit' grammar. The process of acquisition looks much more like a collaborative endeavour in which the teacher's role is to create conditions for learning and to make judgements about when (for example) accuracy is more important than fluency, or grammar should become explicit rather than implicit. When and how do we decide to tell M Jourdain that he is in fact speaking prose?

Although each chapter in this section stands on its own there is also intended to be a connection with the rationale which has gone before. Other key themes which are therefore revisited include the ideas about 'What Grammar?' already considered by both Richard Johnstone and Brian Page and also the relationship between first and second language learning (see Bernardette Holmes p 21).

The answers given to such questions are not identical. Despite a degree of common ground - on the need for real contexts and a range of stimuli for example - all of our expert practitioners have different emphases, talents and idiosyncracies. We would hope that readers will find not only those with which they agree, but those which challenge and engage. In doing so they may return to some of the questions with which we began our journey:

- *How does grammatical understanding aid communication?*
- *When and how should grammar be made explicit?*
- *Is there an intrinsic contradiction between teaching grammar and use of the target language?*

Chapter 3

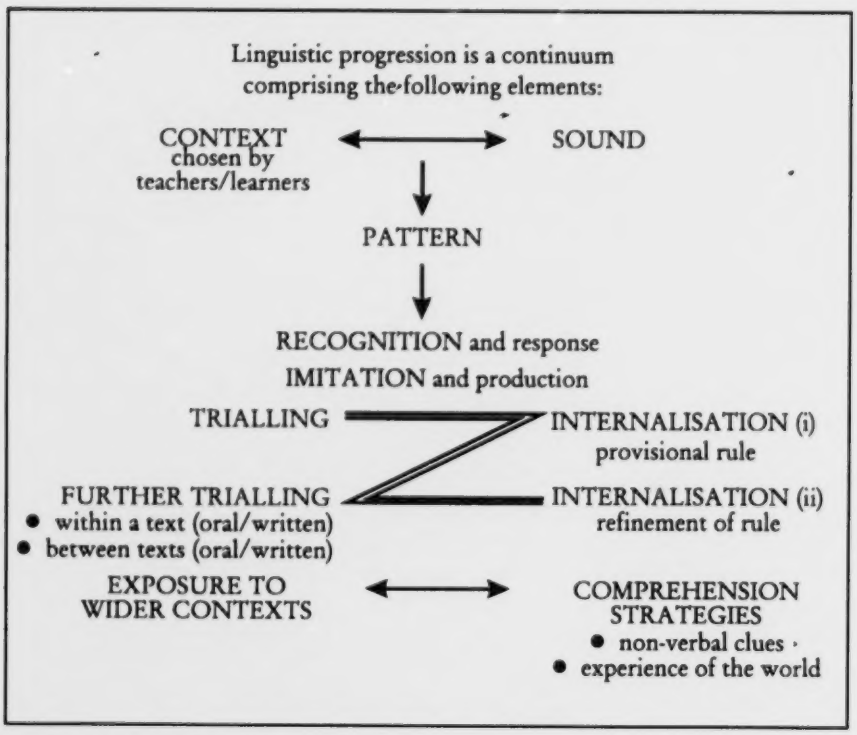
Linguistic progression and increasing independence

Bernardette Holmes

This contribution attempts to exemplify a number of interdependent strands in linguistic development and to relate theory to practical classroom activities, which are engaging and enjoyable in themselves.

The theory

THE CONTINUUM OF LINGUISTIC PROGRESSION



The first stages of language acquisition would seem to rely on the interplay of sound and context. Learners encounter language in a context. To make sense of language, learners associate what they hear with an effect. By recurrence of similar language in similar contexts, learners become sensitive to sound patterns. They hold these patterns provisionally in their memory. The process of instinctive trialling then begins, firstly in terms of recognition and response:

If I respond in a similar way as previously, is my response appropriate?

secondly in terms of imitation:

If I imitate what I have heard will it produce the same effect?

and finally in terms of independent production:

If I recall and produce a certain sound or group of sounds, can I generate a desired effect/response?

At the initial stage of language development, learners absorb and acquire language rapidly reaching high levels of communicative competence. Language functions seem all important and the transition from recognition to production happens semi-automatically without conscious analysis of language forms. The language used will be at an interim stage of grammatical development. There will be frequent use of two/three word sentences, where the structure is telegraphic, relying on naming and linking key concepts without recourse to functor words, which modulate meaning. The language acquired will relate very specifically to defined contexts and circumstances and will take place in a controlled environment. Research into the development of the mother tongue in a variety of different languages shows that early language is dependent on everyday sensory-motor schemas and that similar categories of early meaning are expressed in languages of differing cultures. To progress from this stage, a further phase of trialling takes place.

The Z factor

As learners develop conceptually, their language needs will become more sophisticated. 'Chunks' of language will be memorised and reused. Language patterns that appear to be shared between 'chunks' of language fulfilling similar functions are internalised and become provisional rules of language forms. Further trialling takes place. In the case of the mother tongue, learners will encounter the same language spoken by others around them and will witness the cause and effect of the language. Patterns heard will be reinforced. As the needs arise, learners will trial the language for themselves and apply the provisional rules. With repeated success, the rules will no longer remain provisional but will be internalised and reapplied.

Where learners trial a provisional rule and find that it does not produce the desired effect/response, they will try again to convey their message. Error motivates the refinement of language forms. In communication with others, they may be presented with a number of linguistic alternatives from which to select the appropriate 'chunk' of language to suit their needs. Once selected, if found to be appropriate and successful in achieving the desired result, the 'chunk' of language will be memorised and reused and the process of trialling and further trialling will take place once again, leading to a

refinement of the provisional rule before internalisation. It may be that certain sound shifts have been recognised, which extend the range of sound patterns from which to choose, e.g. *Maman a préparé du café, maman a mangé des croissants MAIS maman est allée au travail.* It may be that exceptions to the provisional rule have been discovered, e.g. *Dad changed the nappy, washed his hands BUT ate, NOT eated, his breakfast.*

Error or failure to communicate effectively can be regarded as the servant to linguistic progression, fundamental to the development of accuracy and of sensitivity to language forms. Memorised 'chunks' of language, even when imperfect, may achieve communicative competence, but are insufficient to enable confident, creative, independent use of language. Learners need to be able to adapt language to suit their own purposes in different contexts. They can only do this by trialling what they already know in fresh situations and circumstances. They can then refine and extend the range of language and language forms at their disposal. The Z factor is an essential stage in linguistic development and one that we can ill afford to ignore in development of second language proficiency.

The wider world of communication

The greater the exposure to wider contexts, the greater will be the potential extent of linguistic development. Language already acquired can act as the stepping stone to the acquisition of new language. Recognition of the gist of a passage of spoken text, supported by non-verbal clues and increasing experience of the world, often enables learners to predict the meaning of new language. In a similar way, encountering language forms in fresh contexts reinforces grammatical awareness and the importance of sensitivity to form, as well as function, in relation to meaning. By this means, learners develop comprehension strategies, which equip them to understand more complex language than they can actually produce, and communication strategies, to sustain and repair communication using their own developing knowledge of language even in its interim stages. Usually commensurate with need and intrinsic interest, new lexis and structure is acquired and the cycle of linguistic progression continues.

MOTHER TONGUE DEVELOPMENT AND SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

Certain strands of mother tongue development can be shared with second language learning:

- Initial stage
  - The interplay of sound and context.
  - Developing sensitivity to sound patterns and their relation to meaning.
  - Recognition and active response before imitation and production.
  - Multi-sensory stimuli to support memorisation.

- Interim stage
  - Familiarity with language patterns and their relation to function.
  - Developing awareness of recurring patterns and their relation to form.
  - The need to experiment with language in familiar contexts.
  - The need to trial language in fresh contexts.

- Increasing independence
  - Developing comprehension strategies in wider contexts.

- Developing communication strategies in wider contexts.
- Stepping beyond single function sentences to complex sentences linked by connectives:
  - discursive speech proceeding by reasoning, e.g. expressing disagreement, persuasion, contribution to a debate, analysing a problem, etc.
  - sustained communication, e.g. a description, personal account, an explanation or demonstration, presentation of factual information, etc.

Implications for teaching and learning

If we accept that second language learning and mother tongue development have these strands in common, it follows that there are certain implications for teaching and learning styles:

- the importance of training the ear by providing activities which focus attention on sound, sound shifts and sound in relation to meaning;
- the value of active presentation techniques which involve learners in various kinds of physical response before involvement in production of the language;
- the value of activities which emphasise pattern and enable learners to formulate provisional rules;
- the need to move from rehearsing language in defined contexts within a controlled environment to applying language to fresh contexts;
- the value of activities which enable learners to refine provisional rules and internalise language forms;
- the need to progress from the production of 'chunks of pre-digested language' to adapting language to different circumstances;
- the benefit in planning opportunities for learners to explore language forms and analyse their findings;
- the benefit in using more open-ended activities, which challenge learners to exercise choice in the language they use and oblige them to reflect on the form and structure of the language required to convey their meaning.

Fluency and accuracy do not develop through knowledge of grammatical forms but through use and application of grammar to secure effective communication of the message.

Together with the types of learning activities we can provide comes the style and variety of learning experience we offer. At different times and for different purposes, learners will benefit from a range of activities, comprising:

- whole-class, teacher-led activities, e.g. language games, rhythmic chanting, songs, collective story telling, question and answer techniques, etc;

- pair work with defined outcomes, e.g. simple information-gap activities reusing familiar language;

- open-ended activities in pairs or groups, which may require negotiation, more sustained conversation, detailed explanation, etc. These activities would require learners to step beyond the basic response and communication strategies to convey their meaning;

- creative, more personalised activities, which may operate on an individual to pair to group basis and concluding with a whole-class activity.

Significant differences in mother tongue development from second language learning

Clearly there are essential differences in second language learning from the development of the mother tongue. There would seem to be three significant differences, which could have an impact on the quality and pace of second language development:

1 If language acquisition in the infant is motivated by conceptual development (Henry Sweet), the second language learner has already made these discoveries and they cannot be rediscovered. Second language learning will be differently motivated. (See Eric Hawkins' chapter 'Percept before precept', pp 109-123)

2 Second language learners are usually readers of their mother tongue and will swiftly be expected to respond to written forms of the second language. They may experience varying degrees of mother tongue interference. Recognition of language patterns will come not only through sound shifts but also through recurring combinations of letters in the written form of language, which in the case of French may or may not result in a difference in pronunciation, e.g. *il venait me voir/ils venaient me voir.*

3 Unlike the infant who is immersed in the mother tongue environment, the second language learner has little or no second language support beyond the context of the classroom.

There are ways in which we can make these differences work for us:

- Although we cannot expect second language learners to be motivated in the same instinctive way as mother tongue learners, we can simulate certain conditions of mother tongue learning by increasing emphasis on the use of the target language for the purposes of **all** classroom communication. The more important the message is to the learners, the more rapidly they will acquire the necessary language to convey their message.

  We can also ensure that the activities we choose create the need and desire to communicate. Activities which achieve this aim most effectively are those which relate to the learners' own experiences and interests, engage their curiosity or stimulate their competitive urge to win, e.g. in a pair or group game or by improving their own individual scores using a text manipulation program. Activities need to be intrinsically interesting in themselves and to serve other purposes than purely the rehearsal of language.

- The fact that second language learners are not new to language learning implies that they already have an awareness of language functions and forms. Cognition and literacy in L1 enables analysis of language functions, which can be transferred to support the development of the second language. This process can be implicit or explicit. It could be that there are two complementary processes taking place in second language learning; instant communicative competence and developing cognition via reflection on L1. (See Richard Johnstone's chapter on 'Grammar: acquisition and use', pp 9-13)

- Particularly in the context of the United Kingdom, second language learning is frustrated by lack of access to second language use outside the classroom. To some extent this can be alleviated by the development of more resource-based approaches, e.g. taped homeworks, use of the library for thematic study involving video, satellite TV, magazines, newspapers, on-line databases. Where communication can take place regularly via exchange tapes and dossiers, fax, and E-mail, the stimulus of interaction would seem to enhance motivation and the pace of learning.

★★★★★

The practice

The following activities, ranging from rap to discourse, illustrate ten quality characteristics which may contribute to the acceleration of linguistic progression. The list is by no means exhaustive. Readers are invited to reflect on the activities and the proposed quality characteristics. How far do the activities described below meet the criteria?

QUALITY CHARACTERISTICS TO ENABLE ACTION RESEARCH

What kind of classroom activities contribute to linguistic progression?

Activities which:

- focus attention on sound and meaning.
- encourage awareness of pattern.
- make learners aware of language functions and forms.
- allow learners to apply newly acquired language independently in defined contexts.
- enable learners to trial new language in fresh contexts.
- offer learners the opportunities to formulate provisional rules.
- challenge learners to exercise choice in the language they use.
- enable learners to refine provisional rules and draw conclusions.
- require learners to use complex sentences linked by connectives (discursive speech - proceeding by reasoning).
- invite learners to give sustained accounts (discourse).

This series of activities demonstrates **familiarisation with language function and form** without recourse to detailed explanation or exposition before active use. A big plus is that all of the familiarisation is carried out with the teacher using nothing but the target language. The pupils initially may make their discoveries by communicating with their teacher in two languages, but by the end of the activities they, too, are equipped to begin reflection using the target language. Appropriate colour coding and spatial

layout can be used in supporting the learners' written record of adjectival agreement.

The essential is that learners have been involved throughout the process in discovering both function and form. Systematic reflection and recording of grammatical information is accomplished after use and in partnership with their teacher. The activities serve to provide dynamic contexts for extending communicative and grammatical competence. They are not merely a vehicle to drill a grammar rule. Involvement in the discovery of function and form develops analytic competence, which will enable learners to formulate and adapt provisional rules.

RAP DES PROVISIONS

- Distribute a selection of authentic groceries around the class.
- Invite learners to hold up the correct item as you name each rapidly in random order.
- Then arrange the items (and the pupils) according to the rhythm of the words:

du thé, du lait, des cacahuètes *du sirop, des yaourts aux fruits*
de la confiture et des baguettes *du café et des biscuits*

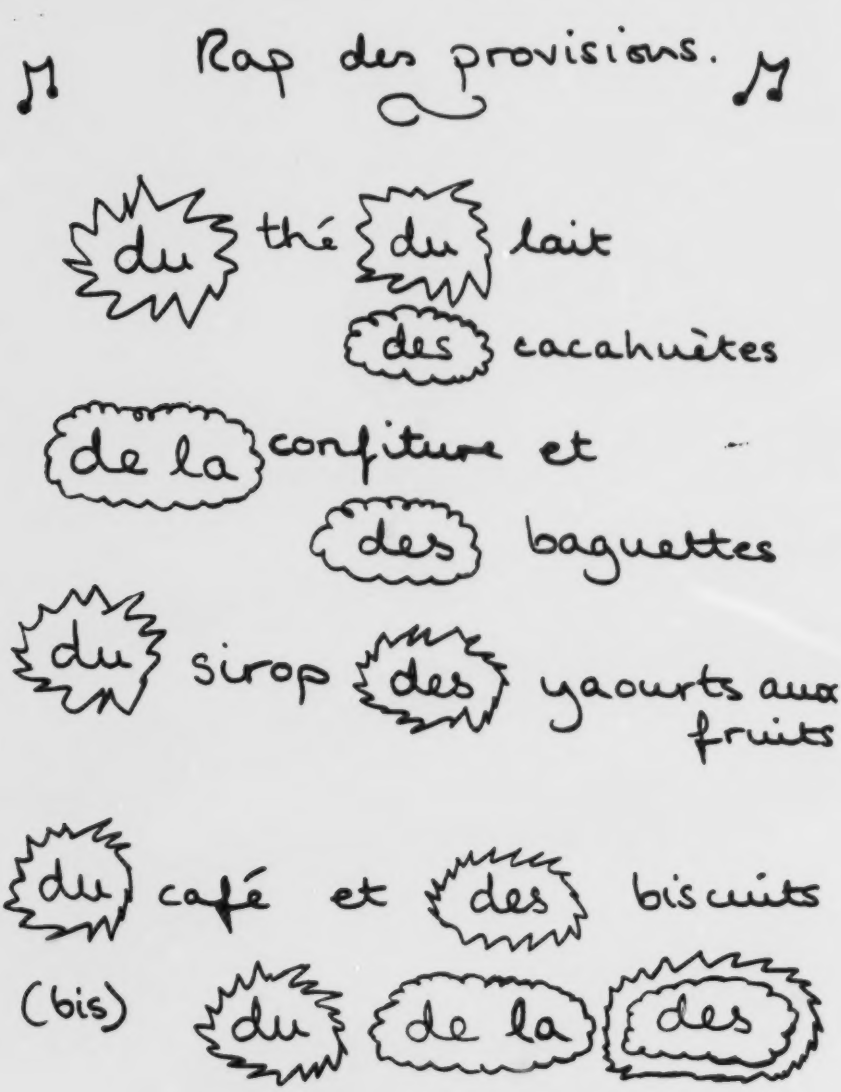
The words can be chanted as a poem or set to rap rhythm. This can be done with the whole class in unison or by small groups within the class, contributing just one item to the overall performance. If the second model is taken, items can be passed from one group to the next, so that each group has an opportunity to rehearse a range of items.

The refrain is: *du* (clap hands or click fingers twice), *de la, des*
du (clap hands or click fingers twice), *de la, des*

The focus of these activities is **sound in relation to meaning**. In the first instance, pupils are only required to identify and hold up the individual items. At the imitation and production stages, rhythm and rhyme are used to support memorisation. Gradually, item by item can be hidden from view as the rap is repeated. The rhythm and rhyme of the rap will enable pupils to recall each missing item and supply its correct form by virtue of its position within the rhythmic framework.

Presentation of the written word can make use of colour coding:
- *du* is written in green and surrounded by a jagged-edged circle;
- *de la* is written in orange with an orange cloud around it;
- *des* is written in red with a jagged-edged circle in green if it refers to a masculine word and an orange cloud if it relates to a feminine word;
- *des* in the refrain is written in red with both the green and orange shapes around it.

So far, memory has been triggered by physical response, rhythm and rhyme and colour conventions. We could also use spatial memory. This could be in the form of copying out shopping lists of items that take *du*, *de la*, *des* respectively, or something a little more active!



PANIERS DE GRAMMAIRE

Three baskets can be placed in different areas of the classroom. One is labelled with *du*, the other *de la*, the last *des*. The class is divided into teams. Items are distributed among the learners in the first team. The teacher or members of the other teams call out the different items, first with the correct form of the partitive article, then without. The object of the game is to fill each grammar basket with the correct items. Once all of the items are in the basket, team members have to unpack their baskets and call out the names of the items, e.g. *du lait*, *du sirop*, etc. For each correct item they receive two points, one for the label, one for the partitive article. If they can name the item but have put it in the wrong basket, they receive just one point.

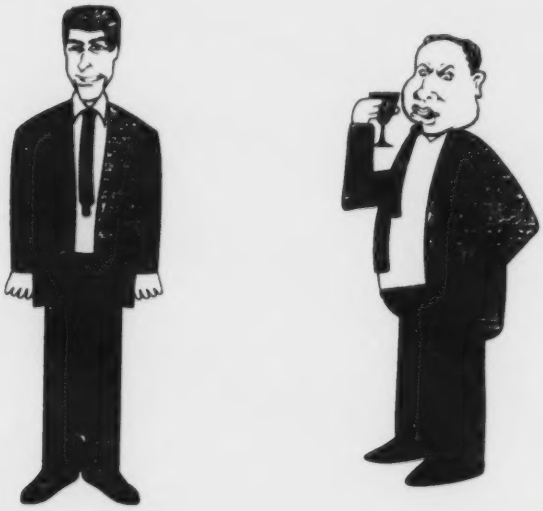
For less able classes catering for pupils with special educational needs, the colour coding can be very helpful. On the base of each item, a sticker with the appropriate colour code can be attached. If the learners cannot remember independently, they can then look at the colour code to help them.

MARCHANDS AUX HALLES

Using photos of a variety of market stalls with all kinds of provisions on display, learners are invited to become *marchands aux halles*. In response to the question, *Vous vendez quoi monsieur/madame?* they list as many products as they can, e.g. *du fromage, des yaourts, du lait*, etc.

This activity ideally should follow a class survey in which learners have found out the likes and dislikes of their classmates, using *J'aime/je n'aime pas* + the definite article *le, la, les*. In this way, items on the photos will all have been met but not in combination with the appropriate partitive article. To complete the activity *marchands aux halles*, learners are then obliged to think carefully about which form of the partitive to use. In this way a level of cognitive engagement is maintained in what would otherwise be a simple vocabulary acquisition activity.

QUI EST MONSIEUR IZAMBARD?



Using an overhead transparency (OHT) in black and white of two men at a drinks party, *au cocktail*, the class are invited to identify *Monsieur Izambard*. The teacher offers as many sentences as possible without using any adjectives, e.g. *c'est un homme/il porte un costume/il porte une cravate/il a deux yeux/il a une bouche*, etc. The teacher asks again *Qui est Monsieur Izambard?* Naturally, the class will still not be able to identify the character. The teacher then puts a leading question to the class: *Alors, qu'est-ce qui manque dans ces phrases? Quelle sorte de mots?* Some classes will be able to respond in French, saying: *Des mots comme grand, petit, vieux, etc.* Others might use English, which can readily be turned into French, e.g. *Comment ça se dit en français,* 'describing words', big, small, old, *par exemple?*

The teacher responds, *Les mots qui décrivent les gens. Alors, ce sont des adjectifs. D'accord.* The teacher can then proceed to elicit some adjectives from the class in French/English to describe the two characters, before returning to the game of identification.

This leads on to back to back pair work, where pairs of mini-flashcards are distributed. Some pairs of cards are identical, some are not. Partner A describes the person on the card; Partner B checks the other card to see if it is the same person.

Model conversation:

A *Tu connais Monsieur Brossard?*
B *Oui, je crois. Comment est-il?*
A *Il est assez grand, costaud. Il est un peu chauve, etc.*
B *Soit: Oui, je le connais.*
Soit: Non, je ne le connais pas.

Partners check cards to see if they are correct, swap cards with another pair of pupils and carry on.

Once this has been completed with male characters, female characters can be introduced, starting with the whole-class demonstration activity. The changes in form can be highlighted. A similar pair work activity can be conducted.

Le monde du passé

CHEZ BÉATRICE

For this series of activities, a range of real objects are distributed around the class (e.g. objects from the 19th century, such as an old iron, a carpet beater, a wooden spoon, a dish mop, a scrubbing brush and washing soda, and objects or photos from the 20th century, such as an electric steam iron, a miniature vacuum cleaner, adverts of the latest model of food mixer, dishwasher and washing machine).

STAGE 1

Led by the teacher, each group or individual pupil establishes whether their object is ancient or modern, *ancien ou moderne*.

STAGE 2

Using the modern objects first, the groups identify the purpose of the object. *C'est pour faire le repassage/nettoyer les tapis/préparer les repas/faire la vaisselle, laver le linge.*

STAGE 3

General conclusions are drawn, e.g. *Alors, aujourd'hui nous avons des fers vapeurs, des aspirateurs, des robots, des lave-vaisselle, des machines à laver.* The board is divided into two vertical columns, or two wall posters on large pieces of flipchart paper are made. The conclusions are written up under the title '1993'.

STAGE 4

Using a large 19th century photo of a young woman, the class is introduced to the world of Béatrice. *Alors, regardez cette photo. C'est Béatrice. Aujourd'hui, nous sommes le 12 juillet 1993. Nous allons remonter jusqu'à l'an 1893* (support meaning by moving the hands of a clock face backwards). *Bienvenus chez Béatrice!*

STAGE 5

Now turning to the old objects, general conclusions are drawn and are noted under the title 1893 in the second column/second poster.

E.g. *Aujourd'hui, nous avons des aspirateurs pour nettoyer les tapis. Béatrice avait un aspirateur?*

Non.
Montrez-moi ce qu'elle avait pour nettoyer les tapis.
Group with the carpet beater hold it up for the rest of the class to see.
Voilà, c'est ça. Elle avait une tapette. (Teacher notes the statement on the board and continues the process, feeding in the necessary vocabulary until the five statements using *avait* have been made).

Cartoons of the modern man and woman are used, showing the man preparing a birthday cake and the woman with her little girl knocking a nail in the wall. These are used to elicit who does what in terms of domestic routine in individual pupils' homes. STAGE 6

Qui fait la vaisselle chez toi? etc.

Usually a range of male and female members of the household are responsible for different domestic activities. Conclusions can then be drawn and noted on the 1993 poster.

Alors, aujourd'hui, nous faisons tous un peu de vaisselle, etc.

Returning to the world of Béatrice, the class draws conclusions about her typical domestic routine. STAGE 7

Alors, chez Béatrice, c'était l'homme ou la femme qui faisait la vaisselle?
La femme.
D'accord!
Alors, chez Béatrice, elle faisait la vaisselle. Oui, qu'est-ce qu'elle faisait autrement?
General statements are then recorded under the 1893 title.

Time for reflection on form is built in. Using the same colour marker pen, the stem of *avons* and the stem of *avait* can be highlighted in the first set of statements. The stem of *faisons* and the stem of *faisait* can be highlighted in the second set of statements. Taking a different colour marker pen, the ending *ait* can be highlighted. STAGE 8

The class are invited to deduce the grammatical rule. This reflection can be conducted in English or using two-language communication. Ideally, step by step the move back to using the target language for explanation can be made. In cases where all the explanation is conducted in English, the break out of the target language should be cued by a clearly agreed convention, e.g. *Alors, maintenant on va parler en anglais* (showing the Union Jack with two cartoon characters with speech bubbles, or clicking the fingers as in drama to signal coming out of role). STAGE 9

The class are invited to prepare and present a response to the following question: STAGE 10

Quelles sont les différences entre la routine domestique de 1893 et celle d'aujourd'hui?

Pupils can respond by simply reworking the statements already displayed on the posters or can add other differences of their own, thus stepping beyond the defined content of the lesson. If the second option is chosen, pupils are then engaged in adapting rules to new language. In this way, the activity offers the opportunity of 'pupils driving the engine' (a humble attempt at what Jesperson defines as 'Inventional grammar').

LA VIE DE MANGE-TOUT LA CHENILLE

This is a collective story telling activity using a set formula and refrain to familiarise the pupils with grammatical pattern. In this case, the use of the perfect for a completed action and the imperfect for description of an on-going state.

The inspiration for this particular activity came from Eric Carle's delightful story *The hungry caterpillar*. Using plastic items of food, each day's menu is distributed to groups around the class in separate bags. Each group identifies what is in their bag and then decides which day of the week they have by looking at the picture story on an OHT.

Each group is in charge of that day in the story telling procedure. The whole class join in with the refrain.

This activity also lends itself readily to developing listening acuity (training of the ear). The teacher offers a version of the daily events and includes inaccuracies. The pupils call out *Non! Ce n'est pas ça!* and the teacher has to go back over the line and narrate it correctly. This is carried out at a very brisk pace.

Pupils can then complete the model story in writing and use it as a source of reference for other stories, e.g. *Archibavard(e)*, *Supersportif*, *Superpoubelle*.

Archi bavarde
qui a passé une heure à bavarder,
mais qui avait toujours quelque chose à dire!
Archi bavard
qui a passé une heure au téléphone,
mais qui ne voulait toujours pas raccrocher
Super poubelle
PROTEGE LA TERRE
• un vieux frigo
• deux vieilles bagnoles
• trois tonnes d'ordures radio-actifs
• quatre tonneaux de déchets
• cinq cents mégots
• des milliers de sacs en plastique
• boules de chewing-gum et bouteilles cassées
dimanche, elle a tout recyclé et la ville était propre
Supersportif
qui a pris une heure d'exercice avant le petit déjeuner,
mais qui ne voulait toujours pas s'asseoir!

Here, the opportunity is given to adapt rules to new contexts. It is the intention that pupils choose a prepared prompt story to start with, but then move on to create their own story, drawing on their own imagination and creativity. At this stage, they are again stepping beyond the defined content and may well encounter linguistic difficulties. It is precisely in so doing, that they will be involved in linguistic problem solving. This is an essential stage in the development of communicative and grammatical competence. The stories provide stimulating and dynamic contexts for the trialling and refining of provisional rules.

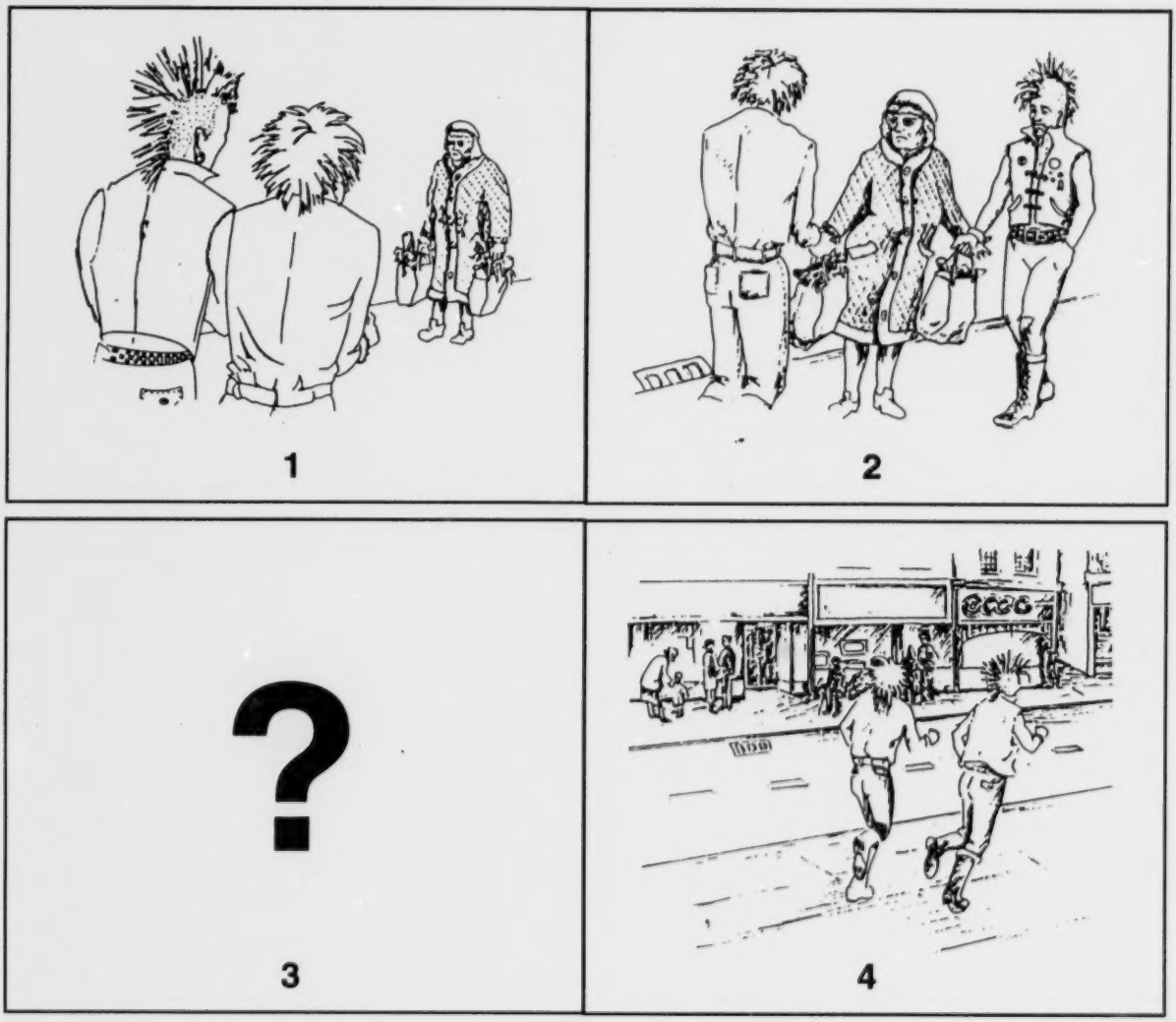
Stories can be performed orally to the whole class or (which is my preference) as part of a story telling carousel, where pupils move from one story to the next, e.g. *Vous avez entendu parler d'Archibavard, qui a passé une heure au téléphone, mais qui ne voulait toujours pas raccrocher. Alors, lundi il a passé une heure, etc.* The audience can become participants and join in the refrain or predict the next event in the sequence. The stories can also be 'published' or recorded on tape for other audiences in the school.

Clearly, in the story telling process there are linguistic conventions to follow; structures which connect one clause in a sentence to another; terms which are employed to link elements of the story; a set sequence of ideas. Even at this early stage and initially with the guidance of a model, we are encouraging pupils to move from single idea communication to cohesive, extended spoken or written text.

QU'EST-CE QUI EST ARRIVÉ À GRAND-MÈRE?

Here, pupils work individually deciding what has gone on in the missing sequence on the picture sheet. They then form groups of four and hear each other's versions of events. They must subsequently choose which version of events is the most plausible or amusing. In so doing, they must justify their ideas and their choice. At the first level, the activity is providing a context for the consolidation of the use of Perfect and Imperfect Tenses. Multiple choice prompt sheets can be given to support less confident pupils with the initial completion of the missing sequence. However, during the group work, the idea is to stimulate discussion and argumentation, both functions of discourse language. Additional language can be prepared and fed in at this stage in the activity.

The story itself can be taken very seriously and involve the discussion of stereotypes, or light-heartedly, e.g. Granny turning out to be a plain clothes detective in disguise or a werewolf etc. Versions can be turned into a short radio play, episode in a soap opera, news item, anecdote on a radio phone-in about the youth of today, etc. All of these follow-up activities offer different opportunities for the development of discourse language.

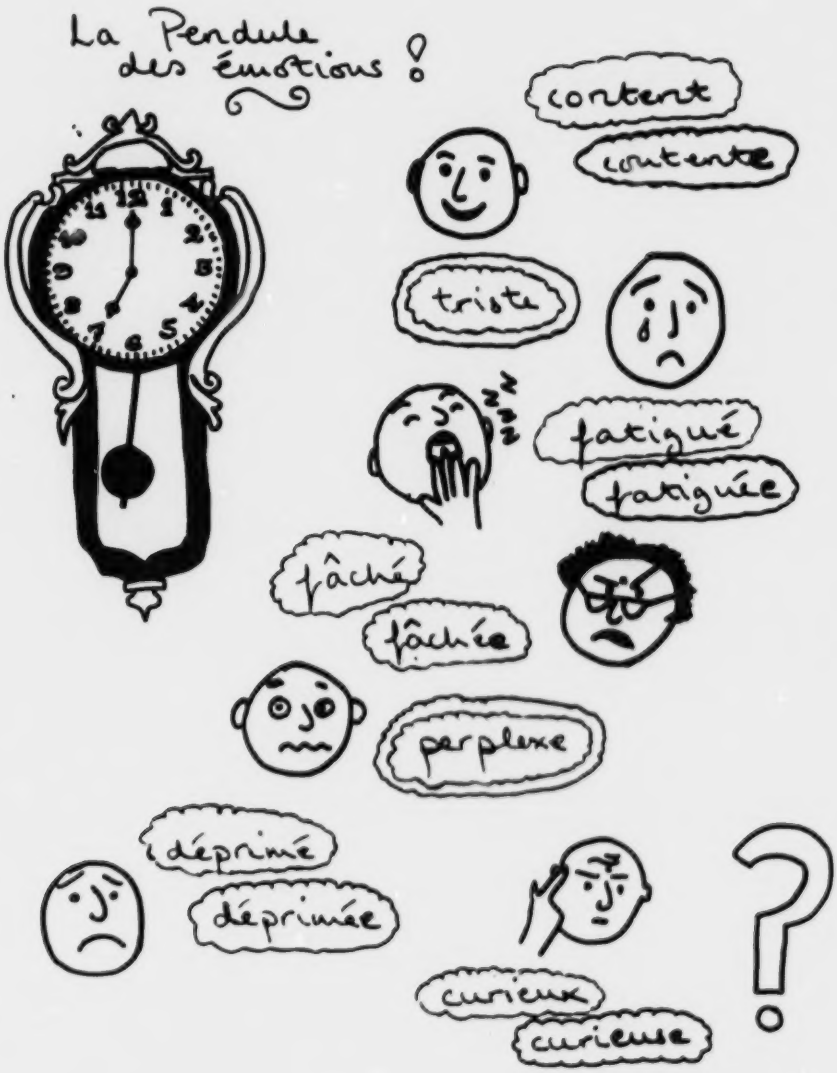


LA PENDULE DES EMOTIONS

Using the OHT prompts, which are colour coded for masculine and feminine forms, the teacher gives an example of how he/she was feeling at two-hour intervals during the preceding day, e.g. *A sept heures hier, je me sentais curieuse, parce que j'ai entendu miauler dans la cuisine et je n'ai pas de chat!*

Pupils individually analyse their feelings and complete their own time line. They then share this with a partner. At the first level they are consolidating use of Perfect and Imperfect Tenses. However, they are obliged to link their ideas with connectives, e.g. *parce que*, *à cause de*, *pendant*, *ensuite*, etc and in the interaction with their partner they will necessarily need to be trained in how to take turns within the framework/convention of a conversation.

At a subsequent stage pupils can report on what their partner has said and therefore move the language one step further into the past, giving the forum for the introduction of the Pluperfect Tense in a dynamic context, e.g. *A neuf heures hier, elle se sentait fatiguée, parce qu'elle avait mal dormi à cause du bruit de la disco en face.*



Summary

The series of activities used in the presentation illustrate certain strands of progression in terms of the development from simple single function communication to discursive language, from teacher-dependent activities to individual/pair and group communication, from reworking defined content to manipulating language in more open-ended creative activities.

The model I have used attempts to make a complex and dynamic process appear systematic, sequential and coherent. Research from Comenius to Professors Hawkins and Johnstone continues to explore language development and to frame and test hypotheses. The process is still not, and may never be, fully understood. In our own classrooms we can also conduct forms of action research and trial particular activities and approaches in our efforts to enable learners to become effective communicators in the foreign language.

Chapter 4

La grammaire? C'est du bricolage!

Barry Jones

The language learning process

A common view of the language learning process in school, not dissimilar to that outlined by Bernardette Holmes on page 19, may also be approximated by the following chart:

Learners start with
an objective or a task.
They encounter and interact with
written or spoken texts
chosen by the teacher/themselves.

They come to an
awareness of pattern
as they involve a range of
comprehension strategies:
context clues, non-verbal clues, experience of the world.

In fulfilling their task or objective they acquire a
provisional understanding of how the language works.
Over time they are then involved by their own motivation and/or through language learning experiences provided by their teacher(s) in
testing and trialling their understanding of patterns.
From these patterns they formulate and hypothesise
provisional language rules.

With further trialling and exposure to wider contexts they
amend and refine the hypothesised rule.

If this characterisation of the learning process is accurate, the problem is whether it is appropriate to intervene in order to help the learners to recognise and understand the language patterns. Since for most teachers the goal is to enable learners to recognise language patterns in order to provide them with the tools for language use, these interventions appear to be desirable. We can perhaps now consider where and when and, based on observation and experience, what forms they can take.

Before looking at what may be done in the teaching and learning of French, it may be worth recounting an experiment in learning a difficult language (Chinese), intended to discover whether making explicit language patterns increases understanding of how the foreign language works. Deprived, in a book, of the **aural** input and dependent on the **visual** only, you will need to concentrate! Attempting to convey an oral lesson in print certainly makes the point that the 'education of the ear' is all-important.

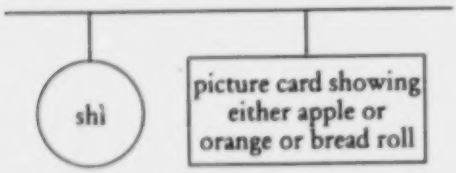
THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Here is the beginning of a Chinese lesson.

STEP 1

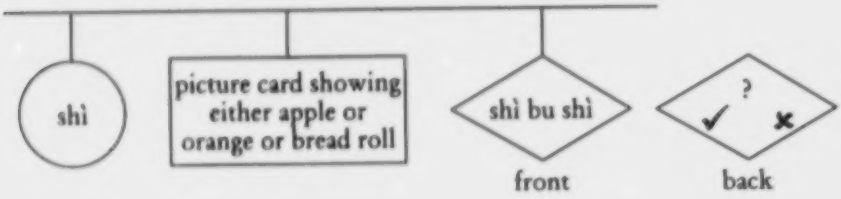
Teacher: (holding up an apple)
shì píng gǔo
(repeats)
shì píng gǔo
(gestures to encourage class to repeat and says with them)
Teacher + class: *shì píng gǔo*
Teacher: (holding an orange)
shì jú zi
(repeats)
shì jú zi
(gestures to encourage class to repeat and says with them)
Teacher + class: *shì jú zi*
Teacher: (holding up a bread roll)
shì mìan bāo
(repeats)
shì mìan bāo
(gestures as before)

As the language models are being established, the teacher hangs the following shaped cards from pegs on a clothes line.



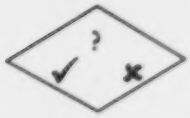
STEP 2

Now for Step 2: here are the cards and shapes the teacher displays.



Then for answer (nods his head to confirm the statement is true ✓) holds up:

Teacher: (holding up a bread roll)
asks: *shì mìan bāo, shì bu shì?*

points to: 

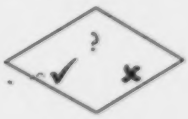
answers: (nodding head to confirm the statement is true ✓)
shì!

Teacher: (holding up an orange)
asks: *shì jú zi, shì bu shì?*

points to:

answers: (nodding head to confirm the statement is true ✓)
shì!

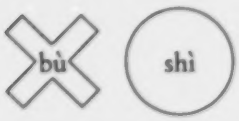
Teacher: (holding up an apple)
asks: *shì píng guǒ, shì bu shì?*

points to: 

Class answers: .....(1)

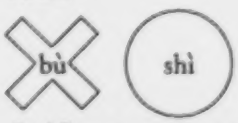
STEP 3

In Step 3 teacher leaves up cards as for Step 2, then for answer, teacher shakes head and holds up:

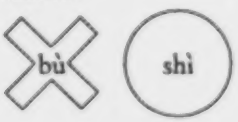


(These cards need to be displayed separately because *bù* will be used with other verbs, later, to make them negative.

Teacher: (holding up an apple)
asks: *shì jú zi, shì bu shì?*
answers: (shaking head to show statement is false ✗)
bù shì!

points to: 

Teacher: (holding up an orange)
asks: *shì mìan bāo, shì bu shì?*
answers: (shaking head to show statement is false ✗)
bù shì!

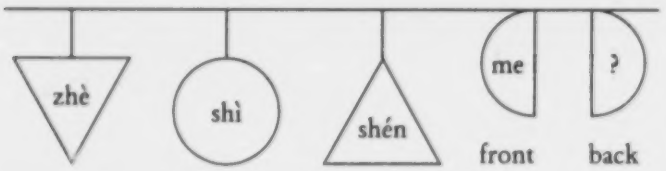
points to: 

Teacher: (holding up a bread roll)
asks: *shì píng guǒ, shì bu shì?*
(gestures for class to reply)

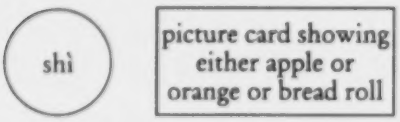
Class answers: .....(2)

STEP 4

For Step 4 the following cards are needed for the question:



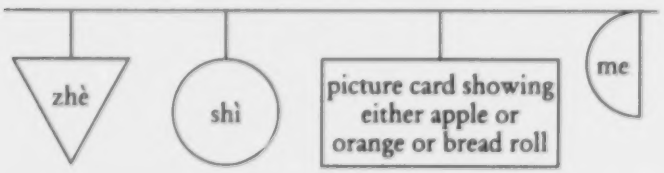
and for the answer:



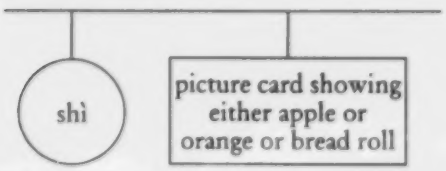
Teacher: (holding up a bread roll)
asks: *zhè shì shén me?*
answers: *shì mìan bāo*
Teacher: (holding up an orange)
asks: *zhè shì shén me?*
answers: *shì* .....(3)
(class finishes sentence)
Teacher: (holding up an apple)
asks: *zhè shì shén me?*
Class answers: .....(4)

STEP 5

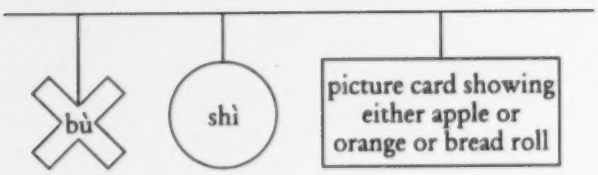
For Step 5 the following cards are needed for the question:



and for the answer:



or:



as appropriate.

Teacher:	(holding up an apple)
asks:	*zhè shì píng guǒ me?*
answers:	*shì!*
Teacher:	(holding up a bread roll)
asks:	*zhè shì jú zi me?*
answers:	*bù shì! shì mìan bāo!*
Teacher:	(holding up an orange)
aks:	*zhè shì píng guǒ me?*

Class answers: .....(5)

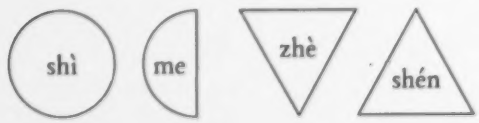
The teacher now asks the class to formulate questions and answers in Chinese. This would normally be done by pairing off the learners and using mime or gesture to signify that they should talk to each other. If this is not understood, the teacher can work with one learner in front of the others and demonstrate what is required.

As the pair work is in progress, the teacher leaves cards hanging from two clothes lines in the order in which they occurred in Step 2 and Step 4. This helps to reinforce the pattern and acts as a prompt.

The next step is to take the cards off one of the two lines, give them to a member of the class and ask the learner to hang them up in the correct order.

Test yourself

Here is one set of cards in random order. Can you put them into the correct sequence?



Were you able to supply the class answers (1)-(5) above?

Those who attended this experiential session at the conference were asked to reflect on their own learning experience in the following way:

What helped you to do it?

- reading the words and remembering the sequence in which you **heard** them?
- reading the words and remembering the order of some or all of the **shapes**?

- reading the words, remembering the order of some or all of the **shapes** and the sequence in which you had **heard** them?
- you don't know!

Although it is difficult to represent an oral lesson in print, the reader of this book might have found that:

- reading the words;
- recognising the order of some or all the shapes;
- checking against the version held in the auditory memory;

helped in both initial memorisation of the pattern and the subsequent, successful completion of the task.

If this is so, perhaps we should experiment more with the idea that **shape, sound** and the **written word** are all aids in the **memorisation** and **reinforcement** of patterns of language. It seems also to be an advantage if words can be **handled and physically moved around.**

From these examples, in which meaning and form are constantly present, learners should be able to say something **provisional** about:

1. affirmative statements;
2. negative statements;
3. word order;
4. the presence or lack of articles;
5. verb formation;
6. the formulation of questions (two possibilities).

} in Chinese

If so, they are beginning to acquire an understanding of the grammar of Chinese. This understanding will be amended and refined as they have more contact with the language.

Chinese/English glossary

- *shì píng gǔo* = (it) is (an) apple
- *shì jú zi* = (It) is (an) orange
- *shì mìan bāo* = (It) is bread
- *zhè shì shén me* = What is it?
- *bù shì* = no
- *shì* = yes
- *shì bu shì* = isn't it?
- *zhè shì mìan bāo me* = is it bread?
- *zhè shì píng gǔo* = this is an apple

shì bu shì = isn't it?

or

shì me = isn't it?

Tones	Shown as
→ 1	-
↗ 2	´
⌣ 3	ˇ
↘ 4	`

MAKING PATTERNS CLEAR

What ways do we have for helping learners see and physically handle linguistic pattern? As we set up language events from which we want our learners to learn, we, as teachers, have several possibilities open to us.

You might like to reflect on your own experiences of learning in judging the effectiveness of the following techniques.

IMPLICIT LANGUAGE PATTERNS

☞ We can select language in which language patterns are implicit:

Example context:	historical personalities
Grammatical feature:	*passé composé*

You will need:

★ 13 strips of card or paper, on which twelve half sentences and a title are printed.

NB: In this and all subsequent examples the learners can cut out the cards!

Que sais-je?
Mettez les phrases dans le bon ordre!

NAPOLÉON*
Il est mort
Il est tombé amoureux
dans l'armée
Il est parti
Il est né
en exil
Empéreur
en 1821
en Corse
Il est entré
de Joséphine
Il est devenu

GUILLAUME LE CONQUÉRANT*
Il a battu
Il a traversé
Il est mort
un château à Falaise
Il a eu
les Anglais
en 1027
la Manche
Il est né
Il a construit
en 1087
le surnom 'Le conquérant'

EXPLICIT ORAL PATTERNS

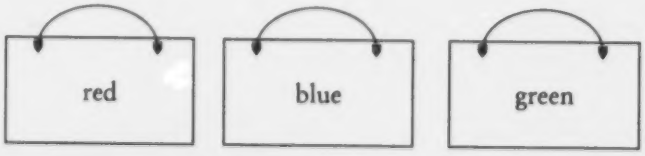
☞ We can make the pattern explicit as we present and practise the language orally:

Example context:	going shopping
Grammatical feature:	*du ..., de la ..., de l'..., des ...*

Put red/blue labels around objects (such as below) to show feminine/masculine and adding a green one for plural.

You will need:

★ 8 squares of blue card
★ 8 squares of red card
★ 8 squares of green card each with holes and loop of string.



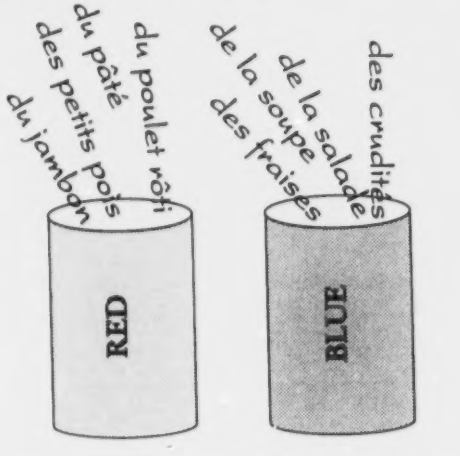
* My thanks to my wife, Gwenneth Jones, for the texts on *Napoléon* and *Guillaume le Conquérant*.

bottle of Orangina
cheese packet
packet of coffee
a French bread loaf
} with blue label attached to each object

pot of jam — with red label attached
packet of sweets — with blue and green labels attached
packet of peanuts — with red and green labels attached

Put *du/des* + masculine words in a blue pot and *de la/des* + feminine words in a red pot when we are putting the visual prompts away.

You will need:
★ *du* + noun
★ *de la* + noun
★ *de l'* + noun
★ *des* + noun on strips of acetate.



strips of acetate going into two model plastic dustbins

☞ We can demonstrate a change in meaning graphically:

Example context:	change of routine
Grammatical feature:	*passé composé*

You will need:
★ cut out head silhouette
★ food drawn on acetate strips
★ cards with *il* ***a*** *mang****é*** written on them.

Push the food into the mouth and say:

Il mange une tomate ...
Il mange un poisson.

When the food has disappeared into the head, ask:

Qu'est-ce qu'il ***a*** *mang****é****?*

using cards to reinforce the pattern.

☞ We can make the pattern explicit orally and in writing:

EXPLICIT ORAL AND WRITTEN PATTERNS

Show how words fit together

Example context:	pets
Grammatical feature:	*j'ai* + type of pet + name

You will need:

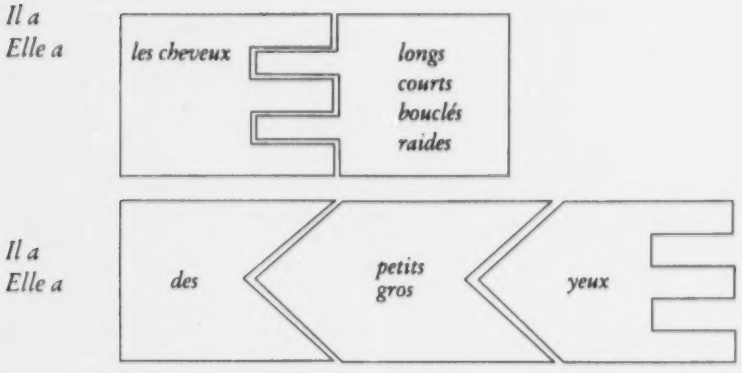
★ words written on pieces of card/paper for the group to move around.

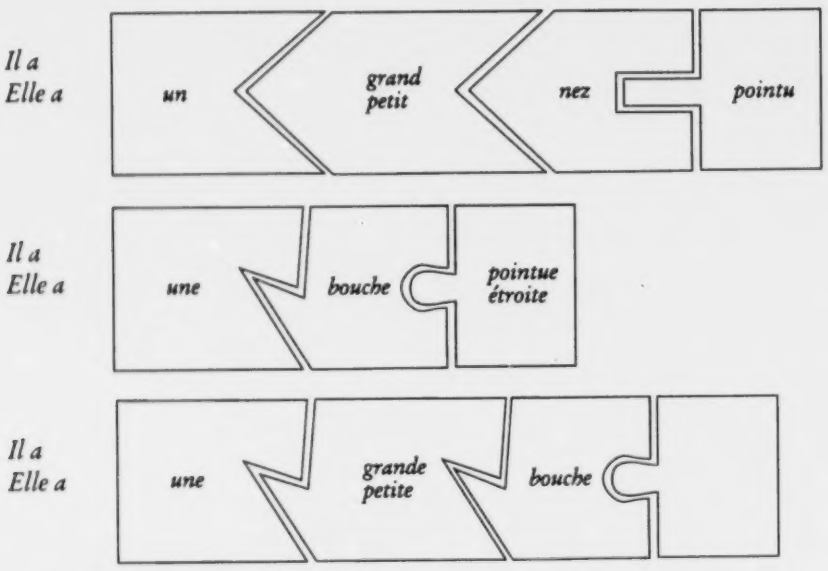
Show how words change (1)

Example content:	describing people
Grammatical feature:	*il/elle a* + facial feature + adjective (s)

You will need:

★ words written on pieces of card/paper with shaped ends/beginnings for the group to move around.





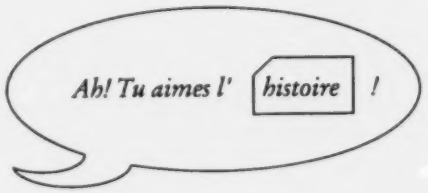
Show how words change (2)

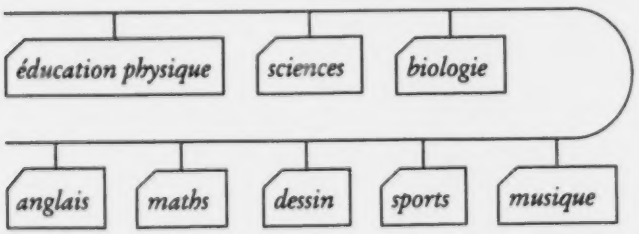
Example context:	what subjects are like in school
Grammatical feature:	*le/la* becomes *l'* before words beginning with vowels

You will need:

- ★ names of school subjects written on red/blue A4 card
- ★ a pair of scissors
- ★ a washing line
- ★ some clothes pegs.

Hold up a red card with *histoire* written on it; then cut off the top corner. Add it to the other subjects hanging from pegs on a washing line:





Show how tense is marked

Example context:	someone is unwell
Grammatical feature:	the *passé composé*

You will need:

★ an acetate showing the text without the words in the boxes

★ an overlay showing only the words in the boxes.

LE MEDECIN SOURD

Le médecin:

Vous êtes malade. Pourquoi? Tous les jours vous mangez un croissant, mais ***ce matin*** *vous* ***avez*** *mang****é*** *quatre oeufs?*

Vous:

*Oui, j'****ai*** *mang****é*** *quatre oeufs...*

Le médecin:

Et, à l'école, ***hier****?*

Vous:

*J'****ai*** *achet****é*** *beaucoup de biscuits. J'****ai*** *mang****é*** *du chocolat aussi.*

Le médecin:

Vous ***avez*** *achet****é*** *quoi?*

Vous:

*J'****ai*** *achet****é*** *beaucoup de biscuits!*

Le médecin:

Pardon! Vous ***avez*** *achet****é*** *quoi?*

Vous:

*J'****ai*** *achet****é*** *beaucoup de biscuits et j'****ai*** *mang****é*** *quatre œufs et du chocolat!*

Show how to make negative statements

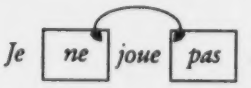
Example context:	which sports are played
Grammatical feature:	*ne ... pas*

You will need:

★ two cards, hole punched, and tied together with a 2 foot string

male teacher putting

cards tied together around *joue* written on the white board, thus:



EXPLORATION OF SYNTAX

We can also explore with learners the ways in which words and sentences are combined.

☞ ...WORDS FIT IN MORE THAN ONE ACCEPTABLE ORDER TO FORM SENTENCES.

Example 1
You will need:
★ six sets of twenty strips of card with words as shown below.
Groups work with one set of twenty strips each.

Faites une phrase qui fait rire!

'Magnifique!'
a crié
le méchant gendarme
en regardant
la jolie jeune fille

'Impossible!'
a murmuré
le gros professeur
en remarquant
l'étudiant paresseux

'Formidable!'
a chuchoté
le petit directeur
en voyant
le grand gâteau

'Superbe!'
a dit
la charmante patronne
en observant
le fromage délicieux

Exemple: 'Impossible' a crié le gros professeur en voyant le grand gâteau.

Example 2
You will need:
★ six sets of nine strips of card (six strips showing *charnières*, three strips showing **phrases**) as shown below.
Groups work with one set of nine cards each.

Changez le sens de l'ensemble des phrases en utilisant les 'charnières' suivantes:

ensuite
pourtant
mais

cependant
par conséquent
et

Voici les phrases:

je n'avais pas d'argent
j'ai pris le bus
je suis allé(e) en ville

Exemples:

1 *Je n'avais pas d'argent.* ***Par conséquent*** *j'ai pris le bus* ***et*** *je suis allé(e) en ville.*
2 *Je suis allé(e) en ville. J'ai pris le bus;* ***pourtant*** *je n'avais pas d'argent.*
3 *Je n'avais pas d'argent.* ***Cependant*** *j'ai pris le bus* ***et*** *je suis allé(e) en ville.*

☞ ...SENTENCES FIT TOGETHER TO FORM TEXT.

Example 1

You will need:

★ six sets of sixteen strips of card with lines from Prévert's poem as shown below in boxes

Faites votre poème à la Prévert! *Prenez des vers.* *Mettez-les dans un ordre qui vous semble convenable.*

Il a mis le café	*Son chapeau sur sa tête*
Il a mis le lait	*Il a fait des ronds*
Il a mis le sucre	*Et moi j'ai pris*
Avec la petite cuiller	*Son manteau de pluie*
Il a bu le café au lait	*Sans me parler*
Sans me parler	*Dans le café au lait*
Une cigarette	*Et il est parti*
Avec la fumée	*Et j'ai pleuré.*
Dans le cendrier	*Il a mis les cendres*
Sans me regarder	*Dans la tasse*
Il a mis	*Dans la tasse de café*
Il a mis	*Il s'est levé*
Parce qu'il pleuvait	*Et il a reposé la tasse*
Sous la pluie	*Il a tourné*
Sans me regarder	*Il a allumé*
La tête dans ma main	*Sans une parole*

★ six sheets of the poem with alternate lines left blank.

Groups work with:

★ one set of sixteen strips of card

★ a sheet with alternate lines omitted.

Example 2

You will need:

★ six sets of ten strips of paper with part texts as shown below.

Groups work with one set of ten strips of paper.

Reconstituez le texte dans un ordre convenable.

Leurs couleurs et leurs formes sont aussi variées que surprenantes.

Une grande serre tropicale, une cascade, des bassins, des plantes et des fleurs exotiques.

SERRE CLIMATISÉE

des centaines de papillons vivants, en liberté

et, volant en toute liberté, les plus beaux papillons d'Europe, d'Asie, d'Afrique et d'Amérique.

Visitez
Le Jardin des Papillons

Venez vous promener dans un jardin extraordinaire.

Une merveilleuse leçon de choses.

Souvenirs, livres et brochures sont en vente dans notre boutique.

Venez observer les chrysalides dans les éclosoirs, où chaque jour naissent de nouveaux papillons qui seront lâchés dès qu'ils auront déployé et séché leurs ailes...

Sur place, vous pourrez obtenir toutes informations sur ces insectes passionnants.

Summary

Much of what we teach and what a learner learns involves the latter in recognising implicit language patterns and, at times, making this recognition and understanding explicit. If such an understanding helps the learner generate the language needed to express thoughts, wishes, emotions, needs, we must do our best to help this process in a clear and obvious way. The example activities outlined above (of which there are doubtless many others) may contribute to this end, and by helping learners understand how language works take them further down the road to that essential autonomy which is our ultimate

Chapter 5

Grammar in classroom interaction

James Burch

The approach to teaching grammar that I am about to describe hinges on the creation of a classroom environment where the promotion of learner-learner and learner-teacher interaction is very much centre-stage, and the syllabus an ever-present but minor supporting actor. The role of grammar in this interaction can be regarded as that of just one of the servants of meaning along with many others, such as context, tone, intonation, body language, social conventions, etc. Thus a structure is used because it is needed at that particular time in order to foster communication within the here and now of the classroom, and not because it is part of a syllabus. No attempt is made to explain what is happening in terms of the structure of the language, although correct usage is emphasised in ways which are intended to start to raise the learners' awareness of the structure of the language they are using. This awareness-raising takes place within the communicative setting of which structure is just one element. Learners will use language correctly; but this correctness will depend more on carefully nurtured instinct and feel than conscious understanding.

At a later stage, should it be felt to be both useful and appropriate, a particular structure can be focused upon more explicitly. This is not so much a matter of placing a new tool in the learner's hand, but more a matter of exploring with the learners, through the medium of the target language, the full potential of something they are already using with confidence across a limited but real range of context. Thus the transition is made from an instinctive use of language to one which is more conscious. The scope of this article, however, only allows for outlining the first stages of this process. It is hoped that the later stages will be dealt with in a future publication.

The teacher's task in the progression from instinctive to more conscious use of language consists of fostering learner-learner and learner-teacher interaction wherever possible. In order to do this, one of the most important things the teacher must do is to equip learners with the necessary language of interaction for carrying out tasks (referred to below as 'linguistic frameworks').

Linguistic frameworks

When activities which feature a speaking element are undertaken in class, the activity will have two levels to it:

- the actual content of the activity as required by the syllabus;
- the linguistic framework, i.e. the language of interaction needed to carry out the activity.

EXAMPLE

In the example of a linguistic framework given below, learners are being encouraged to speculate in pairs about food items. Half the class circulates and the other half remains seated. Those circulating show those seated only part of a food item. The task of the learners who are seated is to try to speculate on what the item is, in response to the question *Was könnte es sein? Was denkst du?*. If they need more information, then they ask to be shown more of the picture. Their guesses are either confirmed or negated by the questioner. If at the end a guesser still does not know what the item is, then he or she asks for and is provided with a series of alternatives by the questioner so that an attempt can be made to guess the correct answer. The learner with the picture then departs to ask someone else. An activity such as this, using the framework given, is well within the grasp of a year 7 mixed-ability class at the end of the first term.

The linguistic framework for a speculation activity

A) *Was könnte es sein? Was denkst du?*
B) *Also, es ist ... (denke ich)*
oder: Ich weiß es nicht! Kannst du mehr zeigen?
oder: Wie heißt ... auf deutsch?
A) *Nein, das stimmt nicht.*
Ja, das stimmt.
Ist es X, Y oder Z?

At first sight the language of interaction might look slightly complex. For the learners it is not. For them it is a re-combination of language they are familiar with and have used on numerous occasions, within different contexts, from the very start of their language learning career. In view of this, it might be useful to examine in detail the route taken and the processes involved in reaching this point by looking at just two of the elements of the linguistic framework, namely *Was könnte es sein?* and *Was denkst du?*. The processes involved are not easy to describe on paper because of their highly active nature; nevertheless, it is hoped that some general points will emerge which can be applied to all areas of learner-learner language in the early stages of language learning. Other elements of the linguistic framework will then be examined in less detail.

The route to meaning, confidence building, fluency, accuracy and retention

What follows is an attempt to 'unpick' approximately four minutes of classroom interaction.

NB - Please take it for granted that a whole range of non-verbal strategies for conveying meaning will be employed in parallel to the ones outlined below. The use of language at this stage is heavily reliant on context.

T=	Teacher language.
Approximate time scale:	Four minutes in the second week of language learning.
Phrase(s):	*Was könnte es sein? Was denkst du?*
Context:	Speculating on what a partially revealed number on the OHP could be.

Use of teacher language

T: *Also, was könnte es sein? Drei, acht, zwei? Vorschläge bitte! Könnt ihr bitte raten, schätzen, spekulieren? So, was könnte es sein? Ist es zum Beispiel drei, neun, null? Was meint ihr? Was könnte es sein? Vorschläge bitte...*

The teacher language here has been carefully selected not only to incorporate the constant recycling of *Was könnte es sein?*, thus signalling that it is important, but also to use language that it is intended will become part of the learners' active classroom vocabulary in a few months' time. The activity, in common with most activities at this stage, is not explained; it is just done.

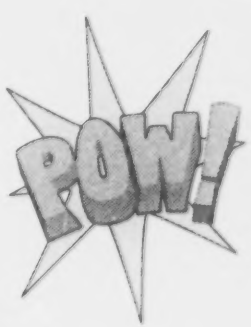
At this point there is usually a forest of hands waving in the air. Lots of answers can be accepted for each number and tension heightened by showing a bit more of the number and again accepting lots of answers. Again the teacher language has been carefully selected to stress language for almost immediate use by the learners (*Was denkst du?*) and much later use, i.e. a few weeks' time (*vielleicht*).

T: *Also, was denkst du (name)?... Vielleicht, könnte sein. Was denkst du (name)? Ja, könnte sein...*

When the correct number has finally been revealed, the teacher can backtrack and gesture with a 'thumbs up' coupled with *richtig* for all those who guessed correctly. Again this is no accident, since *richtig* will be needed in a few moments' time by the learners. It is also a phrase they will have heard from the first few minutes of their language learning.

Full blast on multi-sensory channels

About a minute into this very fast exercise the class involvement can be heightened by going into pairwork. The lesson is put on 'pause', the meaning of *Also, was denkst du?* checked, hopefully avoiding the fall-back position of the pupil-as-interpreter technique. The phrase is then drilled at full blast on the multi-sensory channels (in this instance visual, auditory and kinaesthetic) in the hope that all learners will be catered for and the language will be made as memorable as possible. It is this stage that we will look at in more detail now. The aim is the promotion of the learner-learner language *Was denkst du?*.



The objective of the activities that follow is not only to aid fluency, but also to aid retention, to start to promote the idea of learners helping each other to learn through the medium of the target language and also to start to raise awareness of certain structural elements of language. What with repetition with meaning, imaginative involvement, emotion, movement, context, rhythm and other devices to aid retention, the only link with traditional drills is the fact that repetition is taking place. The procedures that follow are just suggestions:

1. *Also, was denkst du?* could involve miming the concept of thinking, e.g. taking the posture of Rodin's thinker, hissing like a snake, forming a 'T' with the fingers, then pointing in a demonstrative fashion at one's partner and stressing the subject pronoun *du*. (It sounds ridiculous but try it and see how simple and effective it suddenly becomes.)

2. Visual backup could be provided for the above on an OHT with appropriate symbols to convey thinking and the phrase written out with the ending *-st* done in a different colour.

3. Lots of rhythm could be employed, coupled with mime and a small rap routine incorporating *Was denkst du?... Ich weiß es nicht!*.

4. As 3 above, except that the tone and mood of the reply (*Ich weiß es nicht*) reflects that of the question (*Was denkst du?*) and reply, e.g. puzzled, frustrated, etc.

5. Any of the above where the interaction takes place not with one's direct partner, but with someone else in the room. The only proviso is that the learners have to stay at their seats, i.e. they are permitted to shout a bit.

We can see how one of the phrases needed for the routine outlined at the start has become part of the learners' repertoire of active classroom vocabulary. The teacher can now return to the routine outlined at the start and add the learner-learner interaction that has been practised. Quite importantly, this does not have to take place in pairs. To increase the amount of language generated, the learners can talk to anyone in the room provided, as above, that they stay in their seats. To achieve this, the culturally appropriate *Hallo!* would have to be added. This would be another instance of putting the lesson on 'pause'. This strategy will not only heighten involvement still further, but will start to sow in the learners' minds the not uninteresting possibility of being able to communicate, quite legitimately, with anyone in the classroom, should the fancy take them, provided it is in the target language.

Within this same activity *richtig* and *falsch* could be added to the learner-learner repertoire. This would involve putting the lesson on 'pause' and getting the learners to drill each other. Here are some suggestions for this:

1. Teacher does a clear example with the whole class of a thumbs-up-and-down routine where the class has to respond with *richtig* for thumbs up and with *falsch* for thumbs down. The trick is to try and catch the class out, e.g. *falsch, falsch, falsch, richtig, richtig, falsch, richtig, falsch, richtig, richtig, richtig*. This can be quite a challenge.

2. Learners do this in pairs. This can be highly controlled in that under the teacher's instructions learners labelled A conduct those labelled B and vice versa or it could be an opportunity to promote more interaction and use the phrase *Du bist dran* for the first time. And so the communication continues and expands at the learner-learner level.

The first steps have been taken in the learners' use of *Was könnte es sein?* and *Was denkst du?*. From now on it is relatively easy to inject the phrases, or just generally encourage their use. As a general principle this might involve using some form of visual backup as a reminder or re-running some of the routines used when the phrases were first encountered. In this way all members of the class will be able to cope. Furthermore, the phrases used above have some very useful stablemates in terms of meaning and use:

- *richtig* and *falsch* lead nicely into *Das stimmt* and *Das stimmt nicht*
- *Was denkst du?* leads into *Was meinst du? Was würdest du sagen?*

Extending the repertoire in these terms not only provides lots of opportunities to use the second person singular on a highly personal basis, but also starts to add an element of choice to the realm of classroom interaction, and promotes progression.

The only limiting factor in this sort of activity is the imagination and embarrassment level of both teacher and class alike! The former will almost certainly be outclassed by the latter since all classes are in many ways more imaginative and creative than even the most gifted of teachers. All the teacher has to do is exploit the human potential of the classroom. Put more simply, all the teacher has to do is make him or herself look a fool once or twice and let the class take care of the rest! It was no accident that the word *Vorschläge* featured above in some of the teacher language.

If the learners' own suggestions and ideas become centre-stage, then it will be their view of reality and not the teacher's that is shaping the area of classroom interaction where activities are undertaken to help with retention and fluency. There is probably no better route into the realm of the subconscious and long-term retention. Moreover, there is a new exciting dimension to classroom interaction as suggestions are made, voted upon and used. In a sense the teacher and the learners are shaping their own language world.

Let us return for a moment to the *Was denkst du?* activities where the *-st* ending was stressed. In a sense this was quite an exciting moment since we have not only provided a firm memory peg, but the first steps are being taken in raising awareness of structure within a highly relevant communicative context. Moreover, it is being raised in a way that will help foster an instinctive sense of the ending to use with *du*. Through the use of multi-sensory approaches and the use of a real context with a communicative need we have within our grasp the exciting prospect of opening up to a much greater span of the ability range the possibility of generating new language. There is no reason why learning about structure should be the effortful, intellectually arid process it has been in the past: it is just a matter of exploring a concept you already possess but the potential of which you are not fully aware.

Also...
This is used almost from the start as a filler and delayer and is extended into *na ja...* into the more complicated (in terms of structure, but not in terms of meaning): *Na ja, was kann man eigentlich dazu sagen?* or *Also, das läßt sich schwer sagen...*

The other phrases in the linguistic framework

Ich weiß es nicht and ***Wie heißt ... auf deutsch?***
These are the 'shock troops' of classroom language. As soon as these are in place and are being used spontaneously you know that you have a firm foothold in the area of learner-learner and learner-teacher interaction which can now be expanded in all directions.

Kannst du mehr zeigen?
Kannst du becomes second nature as a product of the language of interaction while learners are primarily engaged in written work, namely: *Kannst du mir bitte ... reichen?* with the appropriate language on an OHT.

Mehr zeigen arises from activities where learners need to see more of a partially revealed visual. The transition from productive to receptive use is easy and this is a good forum for encouraging spontaneous communication. Calling out can become *de rigueur*, provided it is in the target language. In this context the class would use *Können Sie mehr zeigen.*

Das stimmt/das stimmt nicht
This follows on the heels of *richtig* and *falsch*. Lots of emotional heat can be generated with these phrases in activities where the teacher makes deliberate mistakes, where learners have arguments, etc.

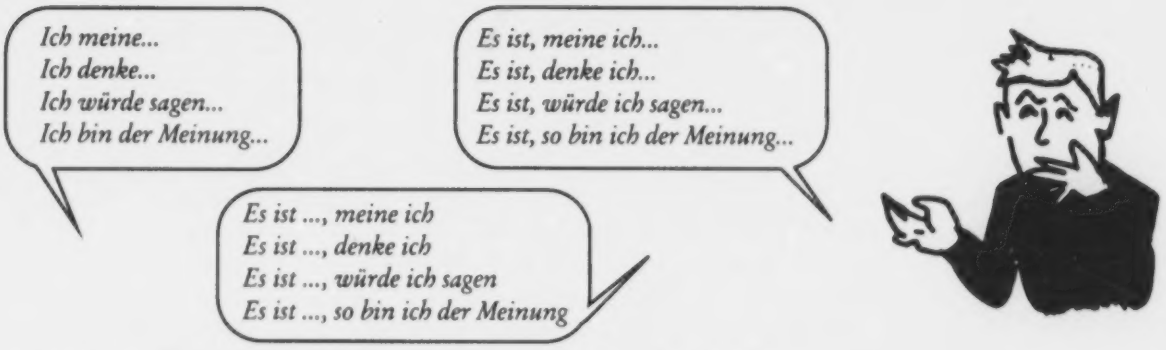
Ist es X, Y oder Z?
This strategy occurs on a receptive level within the first lesson. It is an invaluable tool in getting learners to puzzle out meanings for themselves, rather than giving them the vocabulary they have asked for, probably on the basis of a *Wie heißt ... auf deutsch?* routine. The subsequent switch to productive use can have quite a stimulating effect on interaction.

On the basis of the explanations above it can thus be seen that the linguistic framework that was our point of departure is not as complex as it might first appear for the learners. The only new element is the inversion *denke ich*. This can be experienced receptively quite easily if you have a German assistant with whom you might model the activity, thereby getting him or her to 'ham up'. *Also, es ist ...* (*denke ich*). Alternatively, the teacher can engineer a situation where he or she has to guess at something that the class has selected. In response to the question *Was könnte es sein* from the class the teacher can speculate with *Also, es ist ... denke ich* and every time he or she gets it wrong the class can yell *Das stimmt nicht! Was könnte es sein?*.

After this the transition can be made to the learners using the language themselves. Just prior to this, it would be advisable to drill *Also, es ist ... denke ich* by hamming up the phrase with head-scratching, pointing to themselves for *ich* etc. The context could be a small sub-activity involving guessing and the confirmation and negation of a guess.

How the activity is demonstrated and set in motion will depend on the class and the type of support needed in terms of revision of key phrases and the like.

Progression from this point in terms of inversion or lack of inversion would be to work towards a choice of structure when thinking, e.g.:


Ich meine...
Ich denke...
Ich würde sagen...
Ich bin der Meinung...
Es ist, meine ich...
Es ist, denke ich...
Es ist, würde ich sagen...
Es ist, so bin ich der Meinung...
Es ist ..., meine ich
Es ist ..., denke ich
Es ist ..., würde ich sagen
Es ist ..., so bin ich der Meinung

LINGUISTIC FRAMEWORKS: SOME GENERAL POINTS

- Visual backup is essential. It may not always be referred to, but is there as a linguistic *aide mémoire*.

- When planning, think of the activities and strategies involved in making the syllabus come alive. To do this you will be looking at activities that generate a desire and a need to communicate because they are fun, challenging and have a purpose. Some of these activities may last a few seconds, others may last a whole lesson or more.

- The activity - not the syllabus - is paramount. As with children learning their native language, if the desire to say or do something is sufficient, somehow the language can be found.

- Once you have decided on an activity or strategy that you would like to use somewhere down the road, you will then be able to plan how you are going to get there, i.e. the linguistic framework that will be required. This overview means that during the lesson, the month, even the year prior to the activity you can build into your teaching various 'sub-activities' that will build up to the required language of interaction, as in the case of the *was denkst du* exercise mentioned earlier. This degree of advance planning sounds incredibly complex, but it does become second nature after a while to anticipate language needs. The good news is that a lot of the language needed in the classroom will be self-evident because you, a communicator in the foreign language, will constantly be tripping over bits of it that the learners haven't got yet. You'll know what they need next! Implicit in all of this, of course, is the assumption that the foreign language is being used for **all** classroom interaction. If you're not using the foreign language to get an idea across, then you will never find yourself in a position of actually **needing** any more of it.

- The structures required for an activity are the by-product of the communicative requirements inherent in the activity. They can be as complex or as simple as required.

- The receptive and productive use of the target language in a general sense provides the ultimate vehicle for differentiation. Linguistic frameworks have a vital role here, especially with respect to text (differing complexities of framework for the same language function), levels of support (amount of visual backup, practice, etc), choice (learners can often choose from a range of possibilities and outcomes).

- Once an activity has been chosen, then it is important to see if the learner-learner language required can also help serve, in a highly focused way, the needs of linguistic progression in the departmental syllabus. For example, if it is a requirement that by the end of year 7 all learners should be able to use the *du*, *ihr* and *Sie* forms of address and be able to answer with *ich* or *wir*, then they can experience all of this with activities where the syllabus content could be the letters of the alphabet, but where the language of interaction requires all of the above. For example, activities undertaken with a partner (forming letters with parts of the body while partner guesses, speed trails, alphabet ping pong, writing in the air, etc) can be done equally well with two partners working with two other partners using *ihr* and *wir*. Another dimension can be added by having *du* and *Sie* personalities in the class, e.g. all those wearing Christmas cracker crowns for the lesson are *Sie* people.

- A new grammatical concept is not explained, but careful attention is paid to the promotion of fluency, retention and accuracy through the use of multi-sensory activities.

- As learners progress so does the complexity of the frameworks and the potential routes through them. At the same time the multi-sensory pyrotechnics diminish; in fact, they tend to be used in a reactive fashion as opposed to a proactive one.

- With the range of activities and the accompanying recycling of language, one has the perfect forum for the concept of repeated successful performance, and thus a highly positive spin-off not only in language learning terms, but also in terms of assessment possibilities.

- A lot of preparation is required! However, the regular use of OHP transparencies and increasing familiarity with strategies means that language can be recycled very quickly and learners are equipped both in terms of language and range of activities to start exercising choice. The exercising of choice generates in turn its own very valuable language. For example, a favourite request of a year 7 mixed-ability class of mine was: *Können wir bitte das Spiel mit dem Frosch spielen?*

- With careful planning and guidance, peer assessment can have powerful new dimensions as learners assess each other and suggest routes for improvement. As a language area this is wonderful for modal verbs and past tense, e.g. *du mußt...*, *du solltest*, *das war...*, *das hast du... gemacht*, etc.

- Learners become more autonomous in that they can virtually teach each other through the medium of the target language, because they have the necessary language of interaction and the necessary insights in terms of activities.

- Don't worry if progress in terms of the conventional syllabus is initially rather slow, as learners learn how to communicate in the here and now of the classroom. By the end of the year they will be romping ahead on all fronts.

The above examples should have given a flavour of how grammatical structures can initially be introduced in a natural way because of a simple linguistic need, and how their accurate use can be made memorable. Although we have not dealt in detail here with the analysis of structure and, ultimately, the making explicit of what has already been implicitly understood, it should be clear that the learners are from the beginning being sensitised to the patterns that exist in language, and that through constant use of the target language they are being taught the accurate use of patterns in such a way that they become second nature to them. At this stage, the learner is like a young child for whom high-jumping and marathon running lie still in the future, but who has left far behind the initial bumps and unsteadiness and is now walking with confidence.

Implicit in this analogy, of course, is the assumption that gaining understanding of grammar is potentially no more 'difficult' or elitist than learning to walk; it is possible to render it accessible to a much broader range of the school population than has often been the case in the past. This is not only good news for learners; it is also good news for grammar, since it will be viewed in its natural home, i.e. as a part of communication and not as something remote from communication.

Chapter 6
Welsh for beginners

Geraint Hughes

The last chapter in this section is of a somewhat different nature from the others. The participants at the Lane End Conference were given the opportunity to become learners of a language which they did not know - Welsh - and to reflect on the learning process and the ways in which, even as raw beginners, they were or were not developing any kind of grammatical awareness. Those who also attended Barry Jones' Chinese lesson were able to identify many similarities in the experience.

Clearly the 'experiment' was a flawed one in that a group of language teachers and linguistic 'experts' cannot replicate the concerns and responses of more typical learners. It is also virtually impossible to record such an experiment in written form. Nevertheless the editors - who were both willing pupils of Welsh for 90 minutes - are convinced that the process was a valuable one, not least in its stimulus to the discussion of 'What is Grammar?'.

Background

A brief description of the teaching of Welsh in the schools of Wales might be appropriate in order to allow readers insight into the likely context of the young learner of Welsh.

The National Curriculum has offered the Welsh language an opportunity that it has not hitherto received in Wales. All pupils from the ages 5-16 are taught Welsh either as a core subject or as a second language as one of their foundation subjects. Terminology in the context of teaching Welsh might be somewhat misleading to linguists, since there is a discrepancy between the terminology in Wales and that generally accepted by language teachers. The teaching of Welsh falls into two main categories.

- **Welsh** (core subject) taught to pupils whose mother tongue is Welsh in 'Welsh speaking schools'. Pupils who come from non-Welsh speaking homes (where both parents are monoglot English) and who would be categorised as second language learners are also taught through the medium of Welsh at these schools, predominantly in the anglicised areas of Wales.

- **Welsh as a second language** (foundation subject) is taught in English medium junior and secondary schools to pupils who are linguistically categorised as FL pupils and make up the vast majority of the Welsh language learners. In Wales, these pupils are referred to as Welsh (second language) pupils.

Project officers at the National Language Unit of Wales prepare materials for teaching Welsh (FL) to pupils from Key Stages 1-4. The materials designed over the past ten years or so have relied heavily on work done in modern languages, i.e. being predominantly communicative in nature. There have been recent appraisals of the effectiveness of these materials and supporting methodology and it will come as no surprise that the findings mirror those of colleagues in modern languages. The main thrust is that pupils do not seem to have the ability to transfer language patterns from one context to another. The dilemma facing language teachers is that of compromising the positive aspects of communicative teaching in the clamour for more 'grammar' to be taught. There is, surely, a way of focusing on grammar in a way that is interesting, stimulating and productive.

The objective of this section is to give you, as learners of a foreign language, the experience of understanding some of the intricacies of what is recognised as being a difficult language to learn.

The teaching sequences illustrate:

ACTIVITY 1 YES/NO - not so simple in Welsh!
ACTIVITY 2 MUTATIONS - essential to even basic conversation.

ACTIVITY 1
AFFIRMATIVE/ NEGATIVE RESPONSES

Vocabulary

Wyt ti'n hoffi ....?	Do you like ... ?
Ydy Sam yn hoffi ... ?	Does Sam like ... ?
Ydych chi'n hoffi ... ?	Do you like ... ?
Ydyn nhw'n hoffi ... ?	Do they like ... ?

Present pattern (*Wyt ti'n hoffi* ... (TV programmes)?) STAGE 1

Grammar point

Affirmative/negative responses present tense interrogative sentences

Function

Imparting and seeking factual information

Topic

Favourite television programmes

Wyt ti'n hoffi Grandstand?
Wyt ti'n hoffi News at Ten?
Wyt ti'n hoffi Eastenders?
Ydy Simon yn hoffi The Bill?
Ydy Alice yn hoffi Coronation Street?
Ydy Mr a Mrs Parry yn hoffi Panorama?
Panorama?
Ydyn nhw'n hoffi snwcer?
Ydych chi'n hoffi Match of the Day?
Ydych chi'n hoffi Rugby Special?

STAGE 2

Listen to tape
In groups, students to fill grid with symbols for affirmative/negative responses and make any observations.

	✓	×
Response 1		×
etc ...		

STAGE 3

Present tense answer forms (*Ydw/Nac ydw, Ydy/Nac ydy* etc)

Answer forms

Ydw	*Nac ydw*	Yes (I do)	No (I don't)
Ydy	*Nac ydy*	Yes (He/She/It) does	No (He/She/It doesn't)
Ydyn	*Nac ydyn*	Yes (We do)	No (We don't)
Ydych	*Nac ydych*	Yes (You do)	No (You don't)
Ydyn	*Nac ydyn*	Yes (They do)	No (They don't)
Ie	*Nage*	Yes	No

Question and answer forms

Wyt ti'n ... ?	*Ydw/Nac ydw*
Ydy Sam ... ?	*Ydy/Nac ydy*
Ydych chi'n ... ?	*Ydw/Nac ydw*
	Ydyn/Nac ydyn
Ydyn nhw ... ?	*Ydyn/Nac ydyn*
Grandstand?	*Ie/Nage*

STAGE 4

In groups, listen to tape and fill in grids again this time using written forms.

	✓	×
Response 1	*Ydw*	
etc ...		

Grammar points
Affirmative/Negative responses to present tense interrogative sentences
Function
Imparting and seeking factual information
Topic
Favourite foods

Wyt ti'n hoffi pizza?
Wyt ti'n hoffi cyri?
Wyt ti'n hoffi chips?
Ydy Janice yn hoffi lasagne?
Ydy Bob yn hoffi reis?
Ydy Bill a Ben yn hoffi salad?
Ydyn nhw'n hoffi stêc?
Steak *a* kidney?
Ydych chi'n hoffi tomatos?
Ydych chi'n hoffi Kit Kat?

Repeat stages 1-4 with new topic - favourite foods.

STAGE 5

ACTIVITY 2
MUTATIONS

The grammatical points to be presented and practised are nasal mutations and soft mutations.

The pattern of presentation is as for Activity 1:

- Listen to tape
- In groups, students fill in grids and make observations
- Present mutations
- In groups, listen to tape and fill in grids again
- Students to practise forms

Grammar point
Nasal mutation
Function
Imparting factual information
Topic
Place of habitation

PONTYPRIDD	*Dw i'n byw ym MHontypridd.*
TREFFOREST	*Dw i'n byw yn NHrefforest.*
CAERFFILI	*Dw i'n byw yng NGHaerffili.*
BANGOR	*Dw i'n byw ym Mangor.*
DOLGELLAU	*Dw i'n byw yn Nolgellau.*
GWENT	*Dw i'n byw yng NGwent.*
LLANDAF	*Dw i'n byw yn LLandaf.*

What do the following initial letters change to after *yn* (in)?

P > C > D > LL >
T > B > G >

Grammar point
Soft mutation
Function
Imparting factual information
Topic
Place of origin

PONTYPRIDD	*Dw i'n dod o Bontypridd.*
TREFFOREST	*Dw i'n dod o Drefforest.*
CAERFFILI	*Dw i'n dod o Gaerffili.*
BANGOR	*Dw i'n dod o Fangor.*
DOLGELLAU	*Dw i'n dod o DDolgellau.*
GWENT	*Dw i'n dod o Went.*
LLANDAF	*Dw i'n dod o Landaf.*
RHUTHUN	*Dw i'n dod o Ruthun.*
MANCEINION	*Dw i'n dod o Fanceinion.*

What do the following initial letters change to after *o* (in)?

P >	B >	LL >
T >	D >	M >
C >	G >	RH >

Practice mutations after:
Dw i'n byw yn ...
Dw i'n dod o ...

REFLECTION

Now reflect on the following questions and compare and contrast them with your own language teaching practice and the leaning experiences of your own pupils. Remember - you may find Welsh difficult. Do your pupils find French, for example, just as strange and difficult? What helps you to identify pattern and meaning? Would it help them too?

1. How complementary is such an exercise to a communicative approach?
2. How far does an 'explicit grammar' approach undermine the use of the target language as a means of instruction?
3. Should such a lesson with its focus on grammar precede or follow the communicative use of certain patterns - i.e. which should come first, precept or percept? What helps you as a learner?
4. Which approach could best fulfil the objective of consolidating certain grammatical points?
5. What do you feel are the shortcomings of each approach?
6. Is it possible to mix and match both approaches according to the needs of the learners?

SECTION 3

Developing grammatical understanding

The multi-sensory approach is fine, but don't all learners need rules at some stage? ♦ The right learning environment is one in which the learner has the confidence to take risks. ♦ How do we harness the learner's existing skills and experience? ♦ How do we bridge the GCSE/'A' level gap? ♦ Can we establish a hierarchy of difficulty? If so, it must be comprehensive and language specific. ♦ Coursebook progression is a useful framework to fall back on - but have the confidence to override. ♦ When children ask - answer them. ♦ Teachers must not shy away from whole paradigms if learners want it. ♦ Consult pupils about preferred learning styles. ♦ How much grammar do SEN pupils need? ♦ Grammatical terminology is useful for self-accessing e.g. dictionaries. How can learners in open/flexible learning environments be supported? ♦ Learners make their own rules.

In this third section we present a range of specific issues and experiences relating to our central theme. The very diversity of the teaching situations which are described should serve to underline one of the points made by Richard Johnstone, and reiterated by Eric Hawkins. 'Grammar' is no longer the concern of an elite. So essential may this grammatical understanding be to language acquisition and use that - at some level at least - it must be accessible to all learners, even if, to repeat Brian Page's example, this only enables them to say 'Me go sleep now' (better surely than 'Now sleep go I will Yes').

Despite the variety of what follows there is a logic to it. We pass through various phases of language learning (from the preparation so long proposed by Eric Hawkins to the regularly recycled stereotype of the ungrammatical 6th former) to end with consideration of some of the ways in which materials may (or may not) help grammatical awareness. In doing so a number of important issues are raised:

- *How is 'grammatical awareness' developed?*
- *Can it be taught?*
- *Can 'grammar' be understood by all learners ?*
- *Are there different grammars for different purposes?*
- *How can learners themselves take responsibility for their understanding of grammar?*
- *How can IT help?*
- *How do syllabus designers deal with grammatical progression?*
- *How can the users of such courses judge their appropriateness - or to return to one of the key questions raised in our introduction which is relevant to all of the chapters which follow -*
- *What kind of support is needed for successful learning?*

Chapter 7

Awareness of language

Eric Hawkins

The case for language awareness in the curriculum

The case is presented in the form of notes showing points to be developed in group discussion.

The need for 'knowledge about language' was accepted in the Kingman and Cox reports (1988,1989) on English teaching and in the National Curriculum modern foreign languages working group report (1990). The Cox Committee wrote:

> *'Despite its cogent arguments, the conclusions of the Kingman Inquiry in favour of the teaching of knowledge about language are still rejected by some. We ourselves therefore find it necessary to state a case for teaching pupils about language ... '*

> *'Two justifications for teaching pupils about language are, first, the positive effect on aspects of their use of language and secondly, the general value of such knowledge as an important part of their understanding of their social and cultural environment, since language has vital functions in the life of the individual and of society.'*

And the National Curriculum working group report:

> *'Our perception of the educational purposes of foreign language teaching is (inter alia) to develop an awareness of the nature of language and language learning.'*

Over the years a number of anxieties have been expressed about the traditional approach to language in the curriculum:

- It is **haphazard**.
  'Anyone, by following a group of pupils through a day in a secondary school, can prove that their language experiences are largely a matter of chance.' (HMI, 1978)

- It is incoherent.
  How often do English and foreign language teachers, operating in adjacent classrooms, listen to what the other is saying about grammar? (and teachers of Latin, or of Community languages?)

- It has **huge gaps**.
  Important questions about language never discussed are:
  - How did we learn our mother tongue, and how is getting a foreign language in class in four short weekly lessons a different process?
  - What is the role of the family in language acquisition?
  - Where did your mother tongue come from?
  - What is the place of our language among our European neighbours and on the world map?
  - How do languages change and why?
  - How do written and spoken language differ?
  - Is our left to right, alphabetic writing the only way? (How does logographic Chinese writing work?)
  - How does language (grammar) **work** to transact meanings?
  - How does language make some people more effective (powerful?) than others?

- Many pupils fail to advance beyond 'communicative competence' in the mother tongue, to the 'analytic competence' needed for success in the school process. (see Bruner 1983 and Donaldson 1978).

Lack of 'analytic competence' shows itself acutely at age 5/7, when the child faces the hurdle of **reading**, and at age 11, when facing the hurdle of mastering the **foreign language**.

In Kavanagh and Mattingley (1972), Mattingley argues that learning to read the mother tongue is a '**secondary language learning task**' which is 'parasitic' on the degree of 'awareness' achieved in mastering the '**primary**' (**speech/comprehension**) stage. Note that the primary stage seems to be innately programmed in the Language Acquisition Device (LAD), while the secondary stage (reading) is not innate and must be **learned**. Is getting the L2 at age 11+ also a 'secondary' stage in Mattingley's terms? How far is it also 'parasitic' upon 'awareness' of the primary stage?

There is strong evidence that the same pupils who fail at the 5/7 (reading) hurdle also fall at the next hurdle, mastering a FL at 11/16. Rutherford (1987) has recently called attention to the need to raise 'grammatical consciousness' for language learning. Green's York University language aptitude test (1975), which proved remarkably predictive of success in learning foreign languages under school conditions, was a measure of 'insight into language pattern' that closely resembles both Bruner's 'analytical competence' and Rutherford's 'grammatical consciousness'.

- The statistics of correlation of **reading failure** with family background reveal how far our system is from offering anything like equality of opportunity:

%age of poor readers at age 7 among children of class I	8%
%age of poor readers at age 7 among children of class V	48%

(*From birth to 7*, National Child Development Study,1972)

Class I parents are the administrative class.
Class V are the unskilled manual workers.

These tragic statistics caused Margaret Thatcher, then Secretary of State, to set up the Bullock Committee which reported in 1975 (*A language for life*). The Committee recognised that many children are denied one-to-one dialogue in the home and proposed that somehow 'adult time' must be given back to children who have been cheated of it:

> *'We believe that there should be more adults involved in the school, to afford a one-one, or a one-two, relationship with the children as often as possible.'*

Bullock went on to propose the training and deployment, for this purpose, of a new kind of 'teacher's aide', trained in child language development. Nothing has ever been done to follow up this proposal.

Bullock made admirable proposals but failed to see that the problems the Committee was addressing also concern foreign language teaching (which is nowhere mentioned in the 600 pages of the report). The challenge to teachers of English and teachers of foreign language is now to learn from past mistakes. They must learn to co-operate in offering **all** pupils greater equality of opportunity in mastering the language skills on which the whole school process depends.

French researchers at the Institut National de Recherche Pédagogique, Paris (c.f. Luc and Dabène 1992) have recently advocated the introduction into the curriculum of a course of 'preparation for language learning', a '*propédeutique*', or 'learning how to learn' apprenticeship. The idea is to give a more level playing field and ensure that the learners all start with the verbal learning tools required for the attack on the foreign language.

A special reason why modern linguists should support the idea of a 'preparation for learning' course is that the recent swing to the spoken language (learning by ear, rather than by eye) has not been accompanied by any attempt to offer pupils that 'education of the ear' that MacCarthy (1978) judged essential for effective foreign language study.

As MacCarthy argued, the fact that English is a 'stress-timed' language while French (and Spanish) tend to be 'syllable-timed' offers an extra reason for giving careful attention to education of the ear. Some would also argue that pupils who spend so many hours beguiled by the powerful visual images of the TV are being sold short of 'learning how to listen'. Foreign language teachers here may share some problems with teachers of music.

Sketch of a programme of language awareness

General aims

Aims of programme:

- To fill obvious gaps in present language education.
- To provide a 'bridging-subject' ('*une matière-pont*') which can bring round the table a team of teachers of English, foreign languages, classics, community languages, music, history, drama, physics and biology, to present a coherent language programme 'across the curriculum'.
- To offer a '*propédeutique*' or 'learning how to learn' preparation for the adventure into a foreign language, this programme to include a progressive course of education of the ear and listening for meaning.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- To strengthen pupils' capacity for grasp of pattern in language by exploration of the rule-governed nature of their mother tongue.
- This is continued in a progressive contrastive study of English and the foreign language for the first years of secondary school.
- Where possible, contrastive studies are also made with other (minority) languages spoken in the school or the community.
- Dialect studies also have a valuable role.

In all these activities the approach is **inductive**. Pupils are encouraged to trust to their ears and eyes and **observe the evidence**; only then to induce rules and patterns. Appropriate 'meta-language' required for discussion of the phenomena observed is worked out in discussion with pupils. Only after the grammatical functions and concepts have been grasped will nomenclature ('parts of speech') be proposed and agreed. Once agreed it may be helpful for 'model exemplars' of rules observed to be adopted by all teachers for reference and carried forward and further discussed from year to year.

- At the same time serious attention will be paid to helping pupils become confident, highly professional **listeners** by a carefully planned, progressive programme of education of the ear, setting up accurate expectations as to what to listen for. Some teachers will wish to experiment with simplified phonetic scripts to support the education of the ear.
- The programme will also aim to strengthen what the French researchers have called pupils' '*plasticité d'accueil aux langues étrangères*', building confidence in going to explore what is **new**, instead of equating what is **new** with **threatening**.

TIMING AND TIMETABLING OF THE PROGRAMME

- The best time to introduce the programme is probably the last year of primary school, thus bridging the 11+ gap and involving both primary and secondary teachers in the planning.
- The programme does not **replace** either English or foreign language learning, but is a **bridging subject between them.**
- Introduction of language awareness should not postpone the attack on the foreign language, but should accompany it, possibly for the first two years of secondary school, for perhaps one lesson per week, the time being taken from the English and foreign language allocation in alternate terms.
- The foundations laid at this stage will facilitate a return to more advanced study of language in society (including 'critical language awareness') in 5th or 6th forms.
- The foundation course will also serve to introduce more advanced discussion of child language of special interest to school leavers soon to be responsible for the language development of their own children.

Chapter 8
Grammar and the 'less able' learner

Patricia McLagan

- In what ways can we extend the range of linguistic opportunities available to pupils whom we often call the 'less able' learners?
- How can we give them a clearer knowledge of how language works?
- What sort of teaching strategies and materials will help pupils understand and retain concepts and patterns?

The difficulties

We commonly refer to pupils who may be in the bottom sets in languages in school as 'less able, slower or low achieving learners'. The difficulties these pupils have are of course many and various and may have little to do with real ability in terms of IQ or aptitude for language learning.

They may have:

★ low self-esteem;

★ poor motivation;

★ a sense of failure.

They may find it difficult to listen. They may have diagnosed auditory, visual, social or behavioural problems. They may find work boring and have a very short attention span. Whatever the reasons, teachers try to present them with tasks which are relevant, worthwhile and motivating. We may feel that these pupils will have difficulties in grasping grammatical concepts and therefore tend to teach vocabulary and phrases in topic or interest chunks without a lot of deliberate grammatical sequencing and with little structural consolidation. With these pupils we tend to avoid abstract concepts, explicit grammar teaching and analysis, as rules appear to be internalised only very slowly. After studying a language at school, it is likely that most learners will remember some thoroughly drilled items of vocabulary, some phrases and sentences - 'chunks' of language - those presented at the beginning of their course often being best remembered. Few will end up able to manipulate language, to read for their own interest, or able to create new sentences.

We do know, however, that most learners can, in principle, function at the same conceptual level in L2 as in L1 and that a disposition to understand and use a language exists outside of ability. Were these same learners to stay in the target country for any length of time without access to English speakers, we might be surprised at how quickly they could understand and use new

language patterns. Would this be the real test of whatever we mean by 'ability'? How can we provide a little more of this 'sensitisation' to language in the few precious hours we have with them in the classroom each year?

Course content

If it is accepted that some learners will retain and produce very few words at the end of their course, then the choice of which words and structures to present is crucial. When planning courses we usually prioritise contents in terms of observed usefulness and perceived difficulty. This is the basic premise behind much of the content of language courses for pupils aged 11-16 in recent years. If we look at a typical course content for low ability groups, we find they generally move from one topic to a new one, sometimes with little built-in recycling of vocabulary and often no deliberate recycling of structures. To what extent are language patterns reinforced? Is the emphasis mainly on the presentation and practice of new learning? Which patterns are presented? Functional, instrumental language is important, but in planning courses for the less able it is perhaps assumed that it is possible to progress without deliberately teaching language structures. How can the range of functions, vocabularies and structures be extended? How can we give some opportunities for personalisation and increased liberation of language at a low level? The diet has to be richer than one of nouns, nouns and more nouns.

Perhaps it would be interesting to consider which language patterns are likely to be most useful, and therefore most frequently required, for:

- ★ accurate understanding of the language in a real situation;
- ★ effective communication;
- ★ helping learners to progress.

It is important to consider understanding and not just production. We could choose, for the sake of argument, six key grammatical concepts. Priorities will of course vary according to which language is being taught. Consider, for example, the perceived usefulness of these concepts to learners who are likely to achieve low results in French:

- ★ gender
- ★ tense
- ★ negatives
- ★ number (singular/plural)
- ★ formation of questions
- ★ imperatives

We might ask ourselves how frequently these concepts are found in everyday use of language, to what extent they are necessary for understanding at a low level, and whether learners will need to use them in real situations in order to communicate. For example, the concept of gender is traditionally introduced into language courses early on and well before the concept of tense. But which is likely to be more useful in establishing effective communication in real situations?

The importance of context

Will it be easier to provide a familiar and realistic context for the introduction and use of the structure? Is it possible to sensitise the pupils to the structure through a variety of listening and reading stimuli for a long

time before making any demands on production. Low attaining pupils will have most difficulty if attempts are made to introduce grammatical structures in isolation, out of context and with expectations that they should try to use the structures soon after introduction.

> *It is a great help if teachers use the major structures frequently in familiar contexts and with known vocabulary, often starting months before learners are expected to use them.*
>
> (*Modern foreign languages for ages 11 to 16*, Chapter 9, 'Sounds, words and structures')

Awareness of language

We might also consider the complexity of the structures and compare their use (or avoidance) in the learner's own language. For example, learners may frequently use the present tense in their own language when recounting events in the past, often for the sake of immediacy. The introduction of the past tense in a foreign language may represent a huge step. The concept of 'past' may well have to be established before work on the structures can be presented.

This can be done in different ways:

- by demonstration in the target language, e.g. the teacher frequently says what he or she has done in the course of ordinary classroom business and conversation, e.g. *I saw ... on TV last night*, *I went to ...*, *Have you been to...?*;
- through the use of a calendar to explain past and present;
- through exercises which will make learners think about past, present and future in English or the target language.

4
PUPIL
PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE
'The present tense is where it's at right now,
The present tense is where it's at right now,
The future's just a-coming,
And the past's gone anyhow.'
Each verse of the song, 'Past, present and future', was in a different tense...
PAST for what has happened
PRESENT for what is happening
FUTURE for what will happen
Choose which of the verses each of these lines came from.
Write your answer in the box under each line.
You smiled, we talked, we danced, we kissed
I'll close my eyes, forget the pain
I met you
I went, I need your love so much
But love was blind
past
The way you kiss, the way you touch
I'll wish you luck and shake your hand
We walked in sunshine hand in hand
My tears are too late now
Some day maybe we'll meet again
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Range and variety

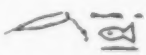
Learners of all abilities are much more likely to grasp and work with grammatical structures if these are presented not through formal exposition but through demonstrations which make a strong or aural impression and require an active response.

(*Modern foreign languages for ages 11 to 16*, Chapter 9, 'Sounds, words and structures')

If key structures are to be deliberately practised in the language course for low attainers, how can it be done without the teacher becoming frustrated and pupils getting left behind or bored? Use of a wide range and variety of strategies and materials is required, with selected language patterns repeated in as many different ways as possible. Patterns are presented through listening and reading, songs and drama - pupils join in when ready. The emphasis is on the repeated patterns, not on the terminology. We need to find twenty or so ways of presenting the same thing and making it fun. Some of the most successful approaches and materials include:

- ★ songs, raps and rhythm;
- ★ clear unambiguous visuals;
- ★ mini-pictures to practise patterns, often through games;
- ★ real objects and other authentic materials;
- ★ drama;
- ★ TV;
- ★ overhead projector, using coloured overlays to point out/vary patterns;
- ★ content of interest to learners.

Aujourd'hui c'est lundi
Qu'est-ce que tu vas faire?
Je vais aller à la pêche
A la rivière.



Aujourd'hui c'est mardi
Qu'est-ce que tu va faire?
Je vais jouer au football
Avec mon frère.

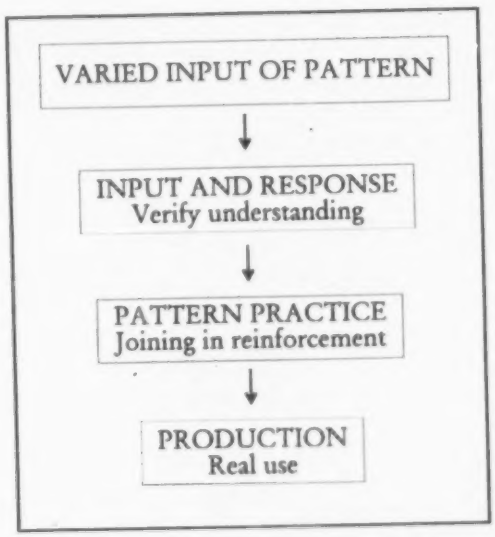
Aujourd'hui c'est mercredi
Où vas-tu Christine?
Je vais nager avec Anne
Dans la piscine.

Aujourd'hui c'est jeudi
Où vas-tu Monique?
Je vais faire du shopping
Au Prisunic.

Aujourd'hui c'est vendredi
Où vas-tu Léon?
Je vais écouter des disques
A la maison.

Aujourd'hui c'est lundi
Qu'est-ce que tu va faire?

From: *Un kilo de chansons* (Stanley Thornes)



Susan Halliwell, in her CILT Pathfinder, *Grammar matters*, stresses the importance of presenting, practising and using patterns in real communication. **Frequent** and **varied** use of the pattern by the teacher is even more important and desirable for low ability pupils. A multi-sensory approach is recommended, e.g. rhythm, rap and songs are perfect media for establishing repeated patterns. Any explanation or discovery of rules comes right at the end of the process.

Halliwell provides the following checklist for maximising pattern:

- **pattern signalled**
  e.g. 'heading' on board...*today's lesson is about..., heute machen wir..., Bon, à la page 45...regardez le petit diagram...c'est ça qu'on va faire aujourd'hui...maintenant fermez les livres et écoutez...*
- **pattern seen**
  e.g. on the board/OHP/wall chart/in their exercise books/emphasised by gesture:
  - words and phrases grouped;
  - highlighted through colour, size, moveable cards.
- **pattern heard**
  e.g. emphasis/volume/significant pauses...used as part of the general instruction of lesson,...*on va écrire et puis on va...tu vas?...je vais.*
- **pattern felt**
  e.g. tapped put rhythms, chanting, actions. Drills have a role here too.
- **pattern explained/discovered**
  both backed by as many of the above as possible.

and above all

- **pattern used in real communication.**

In conclusion, the choice of grammatical concepts for presentation and practice with low attainers is as important as the means of delivery. In this, as in other areas of language development, dialogues and joint planning with colleagues who are teachers of English would be worthwhile. Indeed, it is very productive for colleagues in the English department and in the modern languages departments to work together on language awareness programmes in support of a whole school language awareness policy.

Chapter 9
Tenses: a learner's experience

Christiane Montlibert

CASE STUDY 1: PUPILS AS TEACHERS

What I did, and now do consistently, is involve learners in grammar by letting them take the lesson. Last year, around November time, my class of Year 11 pupils expressed the burning need to 'go back to tenses' and felt they had forgotten the present tense, were confused and needed to return to basics.

I will first describe the class by quoting Dr Lid King, who had met them in their Year 10 as part of a cross-curricular project (teaching environmental studies in French*):

> *A good but not exceptionally gifted group of 32 pupils. Prior observation showed that they were used to working together in groups. Well acquainted with GCSE topics, skills and language.*

So I told the class they were going to do the work and deliver it to their peers: each group chose a different tense and spent two one-hour lessons and two homeworks preparing a presentation on:

- how to form a tense;
- the exceptions, examples;
- practice exercises.

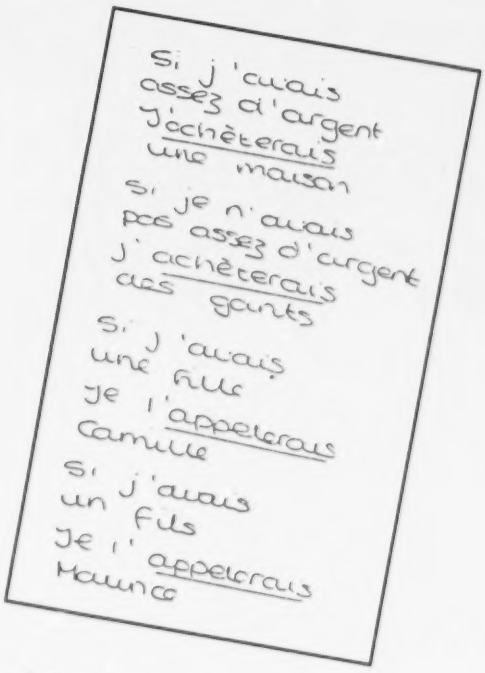
They did not need much guidance on their lesson plan and asked very little help: they asked to borrow textbooks and grammar books and used the relevant chapters or sections to make notes and get ideas for their exercises. They wrote their main points on OHP transparencies (I had an old roll that they cut up in strips) and they asked to have two OHP pens of different colours to highlight endings.

The only constraint I put on them was to write a poem in the tense they were presenting, to illustrate it creatively, and use it as the basis of an information gap exercise.

* Further details in B Page (ed), *Letting go, taking hold: a guide to independent language learning by teacher for teachers* (CILT, 1992).

Mes Jours d'enfance

Quand j'étais petit,
J'étais enfant unique
Je m'amusais,
Avec mes jouets je jouais
La télé je regardais,
"Les Schroumfs" j'adorais.
J'allais chez le Père Noël,
Sa grotte était belle!
Sur la plage je jouais,
Dans la mer je nageais.
Toutes les choses je faisais,
Mes jours d'enfance j'adorais!

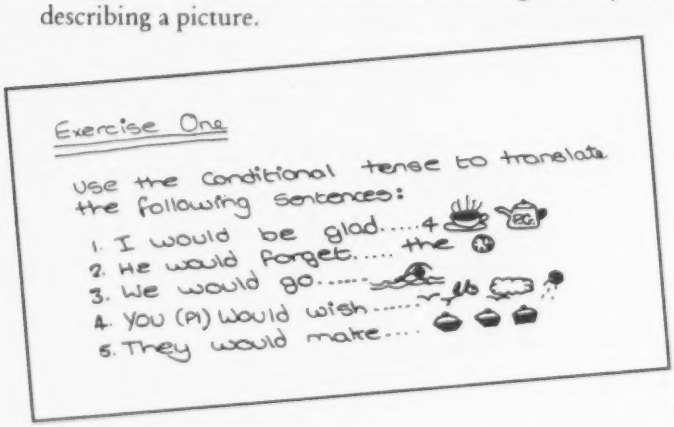

Si j'avais
assez d'argent
j'achèterais
une maison
Si je n'avais
pas assez d'argent
j'achèterais
des gants
Si j'avais
une fille
je l'appelerais
Camille
Si j'avais
un fils
je l'appelerais
Maurice

One group decided to make their presentation in French and therefore revised their commands in the *vous* and *tu* forms.

Without much consultation, they all adopted the same lesson plan:

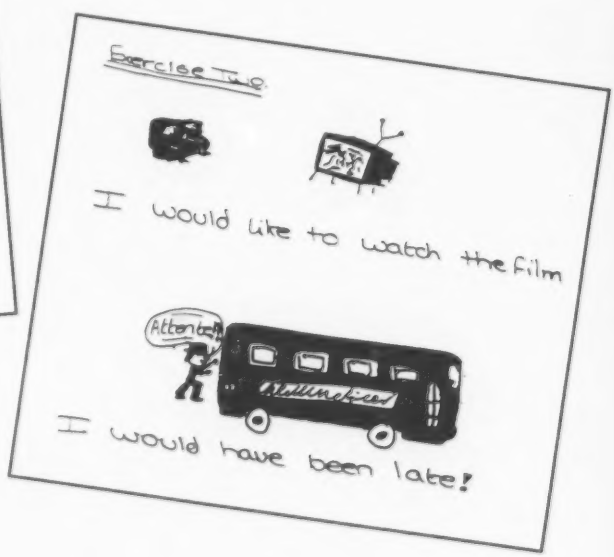
- explain the formation;
- explain the endings;
- give out the exceptions;
- involve their peers in participating orally.

Then, they all used different formats of practice exercises varying from information gaps, crosswords, word searches, role-plays, match them up, to straight traditional translations, writing a story on a specific theme, describing a picture.


Exercise One

Use the conditional tense to translate the following sentences:

1. I would be glad.....
2. He would forget.....
3. We would go.....
4. You (Pl) would wish.....
5. They would make.....


Exercise Two

I would like to watch the film

Attention!

I would have been late!

The presentations covered the present tense of irregular verbs, an exercise on the future with visuals and a 'criss-cross', *mots-croisés* on the perfect tense with *avoir* followed by an interesting gap exercise involving three columns (English, infinitive and past tense), straightforward 'what's missing' and 'write the French for ...', 'add the ending' and 'correct the following' for the perfect tense with *être*, and of course the conditional which at first confused the group as they made the mistake of thinking that it covered any use of 'would'; so after a useful discussion we decided to add a note about 'used to'.

The 'teachers' imposed themselves firmly and only lost control if they did not give enough time to finish a task or if they assumed previous knowledge and did not explain a point in detail. This is, for example, how the group on the perfect tense with *avoir* started:

> *The perfect tense with* avoir, *you take the verb* avoir *and you add the past participle; verbs in* -er *are easy, you take the* r *off and put an accent on the* e = é. *And now the irregular past participles ...*

At this stage, we had an uproar of people saying they wanted to write all this down and do some exercises on regular verbs and check they could do that before seeing the rest. So they did.

They often mimicked my mannerisms without being aware of it, as they used the OHP (I tend to point at the board and not the transparency) and encouraged their peers to give answers using emotion language and praises: *alors, vite, c'est bien, super, excellent, encore, plus fort, je ne suis pas d'accord,* etc.

They also organised homework and tests. I was away on a course once and they carried on with the cover teacher who found he did not have to interfere as pupils continued as normal.

Lessons on tenses

1. Did you find it useful and why?
2. What did you like best?
3. What did you like least?
4. What are your strengths for tenses?
5. What are your weaknesses for tenses?
6. How did it feel being the teachers?
7. What have you learnt?
8. What are your targets? Strategies?
9. Any questions or comments?

The whole project consisted of: one hour per tense, i.e. present, future, perfect with *avoir*, perfect with *être*, imperfect and finally conditional; therefore six hours + formal and informal tests, as well as corrections of other homework such as listening and reading comprehensions, as we felt we also had to practise other skills. Total = nine hours, hence three weeks. At the end we had an evaluation assessing the whole process. One group prepared a questionnaire on an OHP transparency and chose to follow our departmental interview headings.

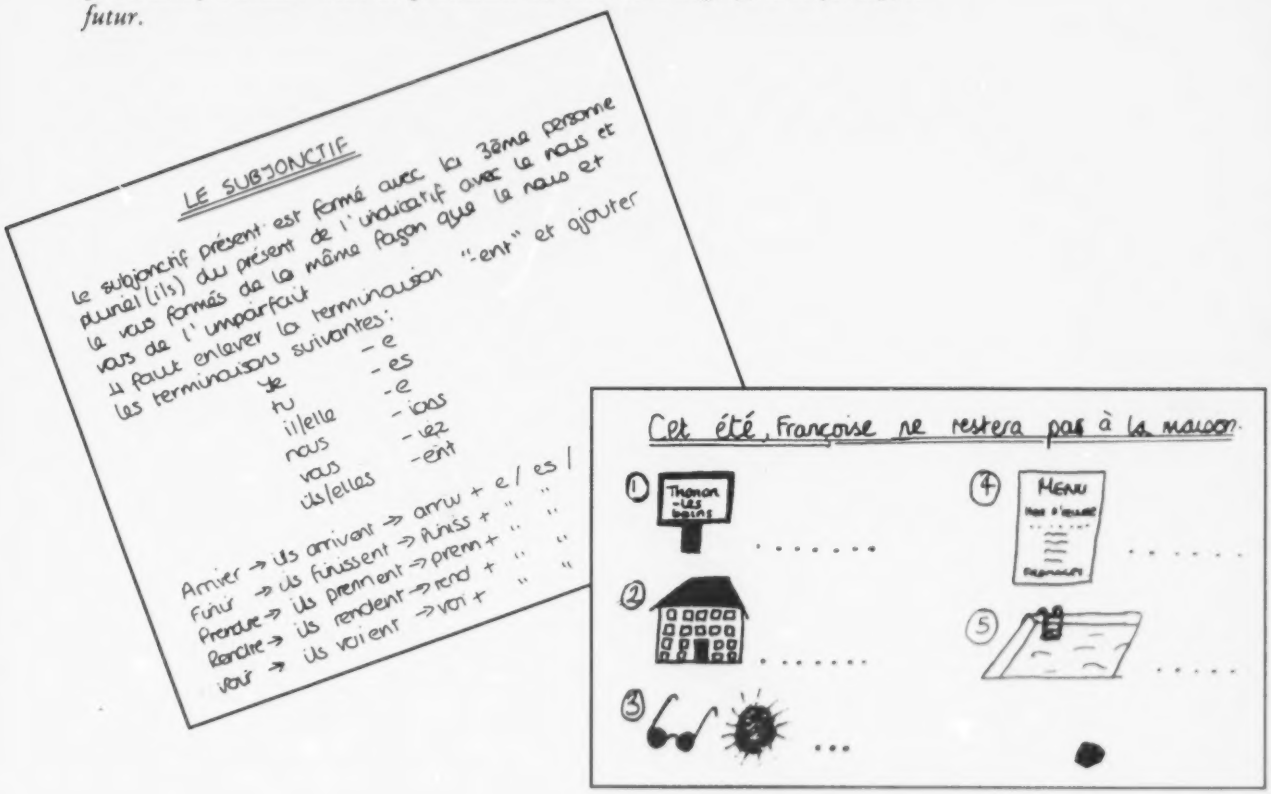
Most of their answers were very positive as they liked 'being in charge', understood better as '**they** were doing all of it', liked 'seeing what it was like to be the teacher' but did not want to become one (!), found on the whole that they were less confused over their tenses but needed practice, especially in sentence-making, found they felt a bit nervous when it was their turn, and felt on the spot when difficult questions were asked. Most of the weaknesses focused on a different tense - especially the conditional, as it was new - than

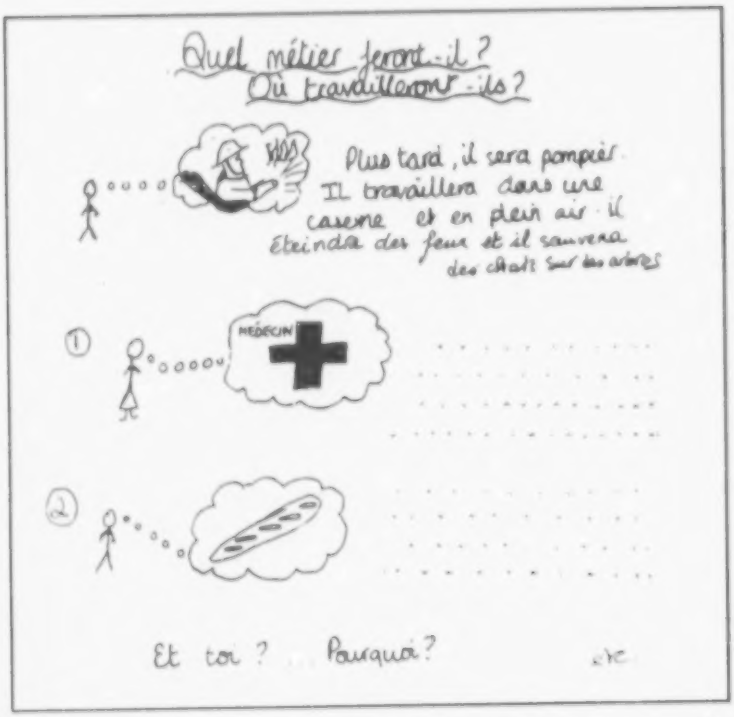
the one they had presented (which was their strength) and their targets were to revise and learn the irregular verbs by heart. Under 'comments', some said they had really enjoyed it but were quite happy for me to return as it was a lot of hard work!

In a way the pressure of teaching, for me, was removed as I did not address the whole class. However, my role was to facilitate the learning, maybe give out more reference materials, spot the errors and discuss them, and give advice on presentation and content. I strongly believe it was much more motivating for the class to revise the tenses in this way as they were responsible for their own learning as well as in control of their peers' learning. They were not recipients but actively involved in the research and the explanations behind the mechanisms of the tenses, and it made all the difference! Also, it allowed us to have 'experts' on a particular tense and when questions arose in the year, I made sure the pupils in charge of that tense gave the explanations.

Most of the lessons were delivered in English and not in French; this was decided after consultation with the whole class; only one group undertook the presentation in the target language. The main reasons were that it would be too difficult for some and they felt their priority had to be clarity for what they considered a major topic.

However, this year with my year 12 'A' level class, the same principle of them taking the grammatical lessons has been applied but they are doing so in the target language; they are no longer working in groups but individually and each person has chosen a grammatical point which they were not particularly familiar with or proficient at, such as *le négatif*, *le subjonctif*, *le futur*.


LE SUBJONCTIF
Le subjonctif présent est formé avec la 3ème personne pluriel (ils) du présent de l'indicatif avec le nous et le vous formés de la même façon que le nous et vous de l'imparfait
Il faut enlever la terminaison "-ent" et ajouter les terminaisons suivantes:
je -e
tu -es
il/elle -e
nous -ions
vous -iez
ils/elles -ent
Aimer → ils aiment → aim + e/es/
Finir → ils finissent → finiss + " "
Prendre → ils prennent → prenn + " "
Rendre → ils rendent → rend + " "
Voir → ils voient → voi + " "
Cet été, Françoise ne restera pas à la maison.
Thanon -les bains
MENU


Quel métier feront-il?
Où travailleront-ils?
Plus tard, il sera pompier
Il travaillera dans une
caserne et en plein air il
Eteindra des feux et il sauvera
des chats sur les arbres
MÉDECIN
Et toi? Pourquoi? etc

The future tense exercises are interesting from a teacher's point of view as they involve visuals, role-plays and creativity.

Once again, we are creating 'experts' in the class who are responsible for answering queries on the points they have researched and presented. The same format as before is applied: the lessons are written up on OHP transparencies, using different colours to highlight a rule, different endings or relevant changes and each 'teacher' carries out an oral presentation with the support of the OHP. The learners normally take notes and ask questions. After the various examples, exceptions and practice exercises, the 'teacher' gives out the homework which will be marked and corrected the following lesson.

I have found the students much more attentive and eager to understand when their peers were in charge of the lesson. This technique also increases the students' confidence not just in French but also in the development of skills for life such as standing up in front of an audience and speaking out loud, making the delivery as clear and enjoyable as possible.

CASE STUDY 2: USING A READING SCHEME TO ENHANCE GRAMMAR

I had encountered problems with story writing tasks with a year 8 low-ability class and previously our *Louis Laloupe* detective attempts had ended up in a communal but very much teacher-led effort. The class was conscious of their dependence on the teacher for this particular activity and had expressed their frustration at not being able to write stories freely 'because of the verbs'.

As we happen to have thirty copies of some of the MGP *Bibliobus* Collection A booklets, I decided to use them to reinforce grammar - especially verbs in the present tense. The notion of verbs and endings was not new to my class but they had great difficulties in handling sentence-building.

So, after the normal verb presentations, practice exercises from *Tricolore*: card-making (pronoun + stem + ending) games, verb chanting, etc, we embarked on something completely new.

- The class read *Oh Jacqueline!* (*niveau 3*, *Vert*) in silence.
- They elucidated the meaning by looking up words.
- They got into groups and role-played the story to the rest of the class.
- They did the *Page d'activité* and self-corrected it.
- They then made a list of all the verbs they could find following the pattern given on the board (they could use any reference material, dictionaries, textbooks or verb tables):

Jacqueline va	=	*aller*	=	to go
Le collège commence	=	*commencer*	=	to start

- We corrected this task afterwards and discussed various ideas such as their definition of a verb: a word in front of which you can use 'I' or 'He' and in this case in English there is an 's' at the end.
- They finally wrote their own individual story following the lines of their original reader closely or loosely, depending on the level of confidence and creativity. They illustrated them in class but finished off for homework.

The outcome was this time much more accurate than previously and it was obvious that they had assimilated some functions, as they were able to transfer and alter utterances from their readers into their stories.

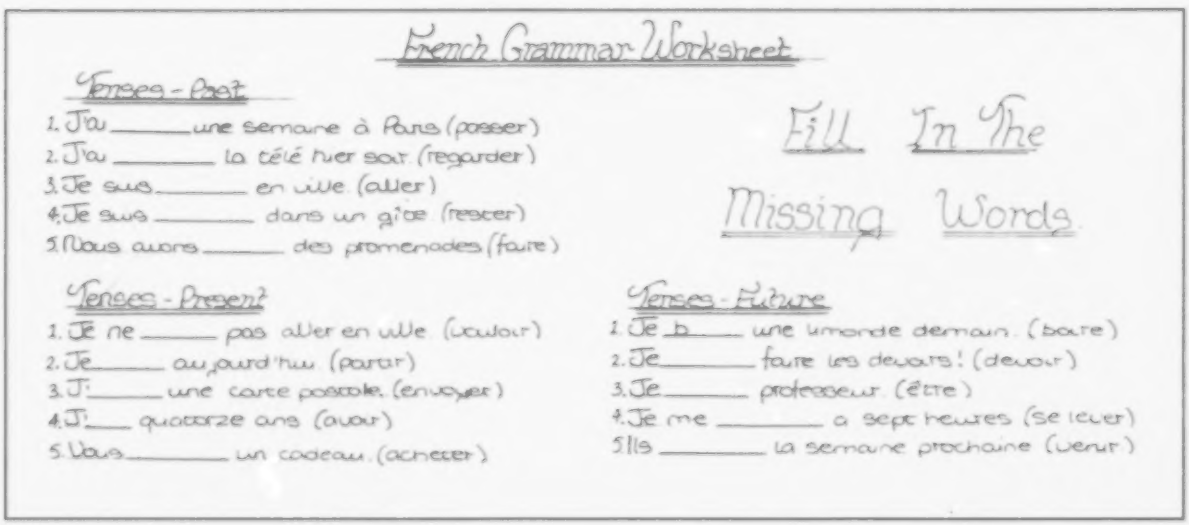
Their work is of course on display in the classroom and they themselves agreed that it had been much easier this time and much more rewarding, as they did not seem to need me as much and were aware of making fewer mistakes.

We are at present busy writing about *Professor Fada* following exactly the same stages. I intend to go back to *Louis Laloupe* stories applying the same principles before letting them write without any support at all.

It will take a long time for them to become independent and creative whilst being accurate, but it is already a major achievement to see them enjoying writing - which, by the way, they considered as their great weakness and dislike - because they no longer feel a failure at it.

CASE STUDY 3: PUPILS PRODUCE GRAMMATICAL WORKSHEETS

I asked my year 9 class (upper mixed-ability) to complement the grammatical exercises from *Tricolore 3*. They were to prepare two worksheets on one of several points; this was done at home on two separate occasions. They had, of course, to work out the answers of their practice tasks.



French Grammar Worksheet

Tenses - Past

1. J'ai _____ une semaine à Paris (passer)
2. J'ai _____ la télé hier soir (regarder)
3. Je suis _____ en ville (aller)
4. Je suis _____ dans un gîte (rester)
5. Nous avons _____ des promenades (faire)

Fill In The Missing Words

Tenses - Present

1. Je ne _____ pas aller en ville (vouloir)
2. Je _____ aujourd'hui (partir)
3. J'_____ une carte postale (envoyer)
4. J'_____ quatorze ans (avoir)
5. Vous _____ un cadeau (acheter)

Tenses - Future

1. Je b_____ une limonade demain (boire)
2. Je _____ faire les devoirs! (devoir)
3. Je _____ professeur (être)
4. Je me _____ à sept heures (se lever)
5. Ils _____ la semaine prochaine (venir)

In class, they had to swap and do the tasks and check their work with the answer sheets. If they disagreed with the answers given, they had to discuss them with the creator of the worksheet and only call me as a last resort, if all other research had failed.

After doing a *Feuille de travail* (FT), the pupil had to express an opinion about it: *facile*, *difficile*, *compliqué*, *simple*, *intéressant*, *ennuyeux*, *bien/mal-présenté*, etc...

They enjoyed this tremendously; once again, they were in charge, the responsibility had been placed on the learners to research and produce a point which was relevant and useful to all the class. They also knew they were going to be judged on their end-products and put in special effort to elucidate the answers.

★★★★★

Conclusion

To start with, try out on a small scale; only try one idea with several classes and compare what worked well and why.

My advice is to 'let go' and let the learners be more responsible for their learning of grammar when it is appropriate. I do not always apply this methodology - there are still many points that I present myself.

But wherever relevant, especially for revision or extension purposes, I recommend letting the pupils take the lesson themselves or contribute to it actively; it will be a change, it will motivate them, create a challenge and will also be a reward in itself.

Chapter 10
GCSE to 'A' level

John Thorogood & Betty Hunt

The dilemma

Not a few teachers of 'A' level language classes are faced with lower sixth entrants who are either oblivious of certain essential grammatical features, or, in stark contrast, are deeply anxious about covering 'the grammar' adequately, believing, as some appear to do, that grammar only begins with the advanced course. The dilemma is something like this. Many teachers will reject the notion that 'knowing about grammar' will lead in itself to linguistic and communicative competence or that conventional grammar book classifications necessarily reflect progression.

Accordingly, they tend to approve of:

- new approaches to syllabus design (notional/functional, etc);
- communicative teaching strategies;
- exploitation of authentic texts with grammatical points arising naturally from them;
- increasing use of the target language as a teaching medium;
- increasing acceptance of a range of textbooks and teacher-made material, rather than dependence on the one coursebook.

...but they are frustrated to find that a number of problems arise from such approaches, namely:

- they fear they may leave out important grammatical concepts which have not arisen naturally from the chosen teaching texts;
- they find it hard to explain more complex grammatical concepts without the help of the 'classical' model;
- they find it even harder to explain these points in the target language;
- if there are several sources of teaching material they have more problems than before in achieving a logical progression.

The challenge

Two major challenges seem to emerge:

- how best to introduce the elements of grammar so as to serve linguistic progression;
- how to organise the course so that we can predict the introduction of the grammar we want and ensure its integration into a coherent pattern.

Even if we do not find the 'classical' (parts of speech and paradigms) grammar classification particularly helpful in our teaching, we must surely

agree that there must be some way of dividing the 'linguistic cake', for it cannot be swallowed whole. If it is not appropriate to separate it into its ingredients, none of which is recognisably 'cake', then it must be cut into slices of usable language. This has been achieved in the functional approach to syllabus design which takes learners along the pathway of communicative need. It has been successful in pre-16 syllabuses, notably those developed as Graded Objectives schemes and incorporated into GCSE. The same principle ought to be applicable to advanced courses. The linguistic need, generated for the younger learner by relatively transactional or touristic contexts, can equally be generated by a stimulating choice of topics inviting analysis, discussion and evaluation.

The question of progression

Our choice of activities may be influenced by a notion of ascending linguistic difficulty, but it should be said at this point that we don't know enough about the respective roles of linguistic complexity and learner motivation to be sure what is learnt 'easily'.

We could either begin by sketching out a likely hierarchy of grammar points to be taught and then select texts and activities to introduce and reinforce them - which is the more traditional approach - or by focusing on the message, the content, of the selected tests and then decide which of the grammatical points arising should receive our explicit attention. The latter is certainly a more 'communicative' choice, because it aims to introduce language on the basis of need, rather than introducing it according to an arbitrarily preordained system. It still requires us to prioritise and sequence the occurrence of grammar points in our teaching programme, however grammatically 'informal' the latter may appear on the surface. More of this anon ...

What grammar?

We come to the question of what we mean by 'grammar' in the context of the 'A' level course entrant - what we should assume and what we should teach, whether implicitly or explicitly. One view is that the crucial division is between 'building bricks' - familiarity with parts of speech and inflected grammatical forms, without which the student cannot independently construct and convey meaning, and syntax - the application of 'building bricks' to a very wide range of structural possibilities.

As regards the 'building bricks' themselves, we may need to steer a path between a kind of defeatism which says that pre-16 learners cannot be taught to understand what a verb is, and an inappropriate rigour in teaching paradigms and decontextualised grammar points which undermines communicative objectives. While our aim should be for eventual accuracy at this level we should not assume that our GCSE student will need no support in achieving it. On the other hand, the elements to be learnt are relatively finite and there are considerable independent learning possibilities, e.g. computer-assisted learning of structures. For example, students could select material which they had found enjoyable and type it into a text manipulation programme such as *Fun With Texts* and offer it to their colleagues as a gapped text focusing, say, on verb endings or adjectival agreements. A self-study departmental grammar which reflected the progression of the scheduled course might be provided to assist in the study of selected texts.

Previous knowledge

Returning for a moment to the pre-16 learner, there is no reason why pupils capable of following an 'A' level course should not have a fair command of the 'building bricks' of grammar. We cannot recall many of our students entering 'A' level courses totally ignorant of the essential functions of parts of speech, of gender and agreement, of the rules of regular tense formation and the main reasons for using the common tenses. Much of what they had learnt was through communicative activities which focused on specific grammatical phenomena (e.g. courtroom simulations - *Que faisiez-vous quand la victime est morte?* for consolidating the perfect tense) ... but they had also been taught to use reference materials for support as is now required under National Curriculum PoS I.6 'work independently' ... . Such practice material as *La grammaire en clair* is very good for providing self-study consolidation of a wide range of basic grammar. They had been encouraged to make connections to simplify irregularity (e.g. seeing parallels between stem changing verbs) and so on.

Who then says that the GCSE fails to provide a need for grammatical language use? The low attainer entering at Basic Level is mercifully spared the futility of trying to learn a full and unnecessary range of grammatical forms. But for the ablest learner, opportunities should be provided as a matter of course for mastering the full morphological system (apart from forms which are archaic, specialised or in some other way of limited currency). This mastery should of course be developed through texts and activities which are 'valid, worthwhile and enjoyable', to quote the official wording. Priority should be determined by observed usefulness. (How often, for example, is the need for the subjunctive illustrated either by avoidable constructions or by relatively infrequent ones, while thousands of quite able learners flounder when they need to say in French '*X wants Y to do...*' .)

Of course, we are not always in control of the prior learning of our new 'A' level intake, some of whom will come to us with serious gaps.

In this respect, it does help to have developed a foundation course which addresses the more basic needs of the early 'A' level student. If we let ourselves be pressured by distant examination goals into believing that we don't have time to consolidate Simon's grasp of adjectival agreement or of conditional clause tense sequence, we are digging him - and ourselves - an even deeper trench to try to scramble out of in two years' time.

Involving the student

Students can do much for themselves by keeping records of the structures they encounter, analyse, understand and re-use,

Text/activity	Structure	Structure	Structure	Structure

cross-checking with a checklist of the most important grammatical forms and structures, or building their own checklist from new structures met with

in the course of study, recording their increasing familiarity with and understanding of, those structures.

Grammar item	Encountered	Understood	Used in context
Il veut que + subjunctive *Il est difficile/facile de* + inf *Être content de ne pas* + inf			

Such recording procedures should be encouraged to take place not only with regard to the printed text or exercise but when using listening material and working with the language assistant(e). In the latter case, it is particularly useful for the assistant(e) to be able to consult student records to verify what grammatical points were raised informally at the previous encounter, which may not always have been the last timetabled lesson. These procedures are more of a 'journal' approach to recording grammar. Useful in a different way could be a checklist of all grammatical features which might be required for linguistic competence at the level being prepared for. For the teacher, perhaps the formal, classical order of features might serve some purpose, but it would be more enlightening for both the planning teacher and the self-checking student to explore other classifications of the available forms ...

Progression determined by communicative need

In *Bridging the gap* (Pathfinder 7 by John Thorogood and Lid King, pp 28-31) it is suggested that the move from descriptive/narrative domain to the analytical/speculative domain could create the very progression from linguistic simplicity to linguistic complexity that we are striving to define. In other words the communicative need (for greater sophistication) determines the nature of the learner's grammatical progression. This can be achieved not only through the overall planning of course content (e.g. having a proper foundation course in which students progress by carefully planned stages), but also within the shorter span of a unit work by developing the treatment of the topic.

The progression thus achieved is well illustrated by an activity on adjectival agreement. From simple and mechanical exercises the students progress to imaginative, creative writing.

ACTIVITY 1
ADJECTIVE ENDINGS TO CREATIVE WRITING

The first stage involves describing people. (It can be complemented by gap-filling, cloze exercises and dictation...)

The teacher will judge whether to use all or only one or two activities

1. Show students 6-10 pictures of people. Each student chooses a picture without revealing their choice to the others. In turn, they describe 'their' person so that the others may point to it.

If this exercise reveals inaccuracies in adjectival agreement, show an OHP transparency with correct forms, for example:

m.s.	f.s.	m.pl.	f.pl.
court	*courte*	*courts*	*courtes*
propre	*propre*	*propres*	*propres*
bouclé	*bouclée*	*bouclés*	*bouclées*
long	*longue*	*longs*	*longues*
blanc	*blanche*	*blancs*	*blanches*
épais	*épaisse*	*épais*	*épaisses*
roux	*rousse*	*roux*	*rousses*
marron	*marron*	*marron*	*marron*

2. Students work at their own speed matching descriptions recorded on audio tape by an assistant, to a collage of photographs. They note vocabulary which is new to them and/or transcribe some or all of the descriptions, e.g.:

   Son visage est rond. Ses cheveux sont courts, bouclés et, pour un grand part, blancs. De profondes rides marquent son visage comme s'il avait souffer beaucoup dans sa vie. Cependent, cette souffrance semble être effacée car il respire la joie de vivre. Son sourire est franc, ses dents sont blanches. Il est du sexe masculin et mondialement connu.

3. Students study short descriptions drawn from Pagnol and classify vocabulary, e.g.:

   LES CHEVEUX: blonds, gris, raides jetés en arrière, en brosse, avec des nattes.

They translate one or two descriptions, e.g.:

Casimir le forgeron était fier de ses bras puissament musclés, et si parfaitement couverts de poils qu'on ne voyait pas sa peau.

4. Students listen to recorded descriptions of photographs. If possible, these should have been described by two people so that each photograph is described twice. Give students a list of sentences, in English, translated from these descriptions and in which the relative pronoun is underlined, e.g.:

   ★ which shows two little girls
   ★ her mouth is open which emphasises her astonishment
   ★ a lawn on which are seated

   Students pick out from the recorded descriptions the matching French sentences. They then make up further sentences describing these or other photographs using a relative pronoun in each sentence.

5. Students look at a photograph of a woman by a window. They then study a 'stream of consciousness' passage from *Les stances à Sophie* by Christiane Rochefort. They write a description of the woman and invent her thoughts.

ACTIVITY 2
VIDEO STIMULUS

The sequence just described is based on still pictures. Video material could also furnish the stimulus, e.g.:

Video clip of someone in their home. Students work in pairs, one watching the other with back to the screen. The one who has watched then describes in detail what has been seen. Both watch again and the partner who is watching for the first time points out all the things missed out. Class speculation about actor's character based on belonging and furniture.

Again, the progression from what is the case, literal description, to what might be the case, is achieved by the choice of activity and requires the students to move towards grammatical forms which better express the uncertain or speculative.

There is much good practice of the kind suggested and briefly exemplified above. Further examples can be found in the following publications: Pickering R, *Planning and resourcing 'A' level French* (CILT, 1992) and Bond J et al, *Aus eigener Erfahrung: von GCSE bis 'A' level* (CILT, 1993). With the help of some of the procedures suggested for keeping a check of progress through and coverage of all appropriate grammar points we may go some way to resolving the grammatical/communicative dilemma.

Chapter 11

Information technology: use and abuse

Pam Haezewindt

IT as a means to internalise language systems

This paper offers some ideas for and issues arising from using IT to raise awareness in language learners of grammatical systems. The premise is that IT used well has the capacity to help learners internalise language systems thus enabling them to perform more fluently and creatively. It is intended for discussion and as a springboard to integrating IT for such a purpose.

Three questions probably come to a language teacher's mind when thinking about IT and grammar:

- What can IT do for the learner and the teacher in this context?
- What is on offer and how do I choose?
- When is IT best used?

These questions are addressed within each of the following sections on the areas of support provided by IT.

Specific grammar programs

There are numerous software programs on the market which offer the student explicit training, drilling and testing sequences on given 'grammar points'. These programs may:

- be dedicated in that the teacher is unable to author them and must use them as they come;
  Example: *Verb Practice* (Ensouleiado) *Grammaire Française* (Educa)
- have a sequence of exercises ready to use but also have an inbuilt facility for the teacher to add his/her own exercises within the framework;
  Example: *Henri Béret* series (AVP)
- have a framework into which teachers can write exercises.
  Example: *Question Mark* (QM Computing)

Explicit teaching

Many programs of this kind have been available for a number of years and may be considered to have been the starting point for CALL - Computer Assisted Language Learning. To some extent they have been marginalised in the wake of the Communicative language teaching initiative but there may well be a place for them in certain language teaching situations. Others are relatively new, sometimes conceived to 'bridge' the so-called grammar gap between GCSE and 'A' level and some are said to answer the requirements of the National Curriculum.

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One of the conditions for use must be that the teacher knows the content of the program well and can use it in the context (communicative as well as grammatical) of the current unit of language work. It must also be noted that sometimes programs are poorly programmed and can give conflicting messages. For example, 'Fill in the gap with the missing article.' (Use the indefinite and you get it wrong!) For this reason, too, it is essential to evaluate a program carefully before use.

Such programs can provide self-access, individualised practice for students in Year 11 and beyond. As language learners make errors they provide clues to their learning processes and such programs, carefully selected by teachers, might provide support and strategies for progress. When a student has sufficient language in a variety of contexts the often mixed contexts of dedicated grammatical exercise programs are less likely to distract from the form. The advantage of a framework program is that it can be authored to fit the context of current language work.

Follow-up: It is important that work with such programs is followed up, that the teacher ascertains what the student has learned and that this knowledge is consolidated, reused and retained.

Authoring programs with text manipulation activities

These programs offer the student practice in working with text in a variety of ways. Teachers are able to write in the texts of their choice to fit with current language work and the program provides an activity or a number of activities for the student to do with the text - E.g. Rearrange the lines into a correct sequence, fill in the gaps, uncover a hidden text. The teacher facilitates this as appropriate by providing, for example, visual or aural stimulus. The programs provide instant feedback.

Examples:

Word sequencing (Camsoft)
Panache (CECC)
Fun with texts (Camsoft)
Gapmaster (Wida)
Modern languages developing tray (ILECC)
Storyboard (Wida)

Implicit/explicit text manipulation

Support for acquiring and internalising grammatical systems from such programs may be explicit or implicit.

A program may be authored with a text where the specific intention of that and the activity is to raise awareness in the student of a particular gammatical point. It may not be the primary objective of the text manipulation activity for the student (or for the teacher) but the teacher has seized an opportunity to enable some students to internalise some understanding of a system.

In general, text manipulation activities will often raise student awareness of systems implicitly - listening to conversation as students work at such activities can often be very revealing of progress being made (or not) in the understanding of the underlying system of the language.

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This type of activity can be used from the very earliest of days of language learning. (An example is provided in the Appendix.)

Generic software support

Generic software is the term given to programs which are used in all walks of life and across the curriculum to facilitate the communicating and handling of information.

Examples: Word Processor; Database.

WORD PROCESSING

The word processor has tools which can be used explicitly to highlight underlying language systems and enable students to think about the way in which a language is structured. With some word processors there are possibilities now of linking text and sound. Such a facility may well prove beneficial for reading skills in which grammatical decoding is implicit.

Using formatting procedures such as **Bold**, *Italic* and Underline can alert students to grammatical points in a stored text. For example, students are asked to redraft a stored text according to a particular task; the stored text has all the definite and indefinite articles highlighted. This alerts students who are ready for it to a system and to take care with this point in their redrafting. It is not, however, the primary function of the exercise. In another activity, students might be asked to load in a text and italicise for themselves all the instances of, for example, adjectives in this context This could lead to discussion, the pooling of ideas for synonyms, redrafting.....

Using such tools as 'Search and Replace' or 'Delete and Insert', text can be manipulated on screen in similar ways to that of a text manipulating program. There is no instant feedback from the program; the teacher and other students may facilitate this. Watch a Year 9 group of able students replace all the first person pronouns with third person and then correct the text accordingly and one can see some implicit understanding of systems and the effect of collaborative learning in the process. (This might be the time for the teacher to draw out the implicit understanding into something more concrete.)

The word processor allows students to experiment with written language, to be creative without fear of lengthy and time-consuming correction and recopying. This allows them to experiment less inhibitedly with the way language 'hangs together' which in turn supports the acquisition of language systems. Since grammatical awareness of structure and form also enables students to be more creative and manipulative of language, it follows that we have a powerful tool in the word processor to enhance writing skills in a foreign language.

A word of caution: Sophisticated word processors and desk top publishing packages are powerful presentation tools. When used as such in the MFL classroom they can make grammatical 'weaknesses' very public. Not only may this be demotivating, it highlights the issue of authenticity of the end product.

DATABASES

Although using a database in modern languages has many more justifications than that of raising awareness of structure and form, as a by-product it is worth noting that:

- Writing information into a datafile and using the datafile to search for information or check out hypotheses requires accuracy. Lack of accurate language input affects the interrogation and will give false results. Students are quick to learn this and are motivated towards greater accuracy.
- In order to construct a datafile structure and/or a set of questions to acquire specific items of information in a survey, students learn about language and systems. For example: In its simplest form, given a set of field names such as NAME, AGE, BREAKFAST, LUNCH, DINNER, students are asked to compile the questions needed to find out such information from people. Conversely, they may have a set of information gleaned from brochures and will need to find words for the field names which summarise adequately the type of information to be written in the datafile. This type of manipulation of language cannot fail to raise some innate awareness of a system in students who are ready and able to internalise this.

Support software

The following can offer a supportive environment for acquiring some understanding of grammatical and lexical systems.

Whole word processing
This provides a facility for easily lifting pre-authored words and text which appear on one part of the screen (or on an overlay on a concept keyboard) into the main body of a text or onto a blank screen to create phrases, sentences, paragraphs, poems .....

Examples:
Minnie (MUSE) (a basic word processor with this facility)
Clickword (CECC) a utility which can be attached to a word processor and other types of software
Prompt writer (NCET/SEMERC) and concept keyboard overlay

Spell Checkers, Grammar Checkers and Dictionaries
These sophisticated tools are supportive if used thoughtfully. They allow speedy access to language correction/accuracy on screen in a modern languages context and if students are taught to think about the 'check' and ask questions, such tools may well heighten their awareness of the structure of language.

★★★★★

The role of IT in grammar ... use

- IT supports the learner in understanding systems.
- IT does not replace the teacher for the learner; IT can provide additional opportunity to get to grips with systems.
- IT enables the learner to manipulate language safely.

- IT can encourage comprehension through thinking about the system.
- IT can provide the opportunity to take risks, to try out own strategies, to self correct.
- IT can encourage students to be creative and accurate.

Most software will not do any harm but beware of:

...and abuse

- Software which is poorly programmed and gives the wrong or confusing messages.
  - The learner is told he or she is wrong when he or she is right.
  - A mish-mash of English and target language.
  - There are confusing distracters
- The 'exercise' which is not in context.
  In terms of
  - present work and language already learned
  - subject matter (i.e. as in some dedicated programs)
- Using IT for too long.
- The 'exercise' which is not followed up purposefully for the student.

A practical example which uses IT to develop understanding of a particular grammatical point is given in Appendix 2 on page 125.

Chapter 12

Grammar in a coursebook: a writer's perspective

Barry Jones

Introduction

A coursebook for 11-16-year-old learners must resolve several problems. First, the content must appeal to its target audience. Secondly, the language presented must go beyond practice to enable learners to express their own ideas. Thirdly, the expectations of teachers must be met in terms of the book fulfilling the requirements of the National Curriculum, providing topics and a sequence of language which they feel comfortable about teaching. Lastly it must provide enough material which is new yet not too unfamiliar and which can be taught week by week without too many extra materials being required. It must have 'pupil appeal', be accessible across the whole ability range yet offer challenges to less able and more able alike, and have progression and differentiation built into it. It must also enable learners, little by little, to become confident enough to try to use the language for their own purposes and to make progress in a variety of activities and through a number of measurable stages. Given this complexity and the problems which must be solved, this contribution sets out to focus specifically on the part grammatical considerations play within this interlocking jigsaw. By providing insights into the development of this aspect of a coursebook the writer is trying to help teachers use it in a way which is most relevant to their teaching and to the aim of the course. It will therefore:

- analyse the writer's task in detail;
- outline the issues which the task raises;
- provide an indication of the strategies one writer adopts to resolve the issues;
- detail the strategies the writer includes to help the learner learn.

The task

The writer's task may be characterised as follows:

- to present selections of natural language being used for real purposes;
- to enable learners to communicate in a number of settings and with a range of people, and to interact with a range of spoken and written texts;
- either implicitly or explicitly to reveal structures inherent in the language;
- to bring learners to an understanding of these structures so that they can generate and understand other utterances in the target language;

- in considering structures, to focus on:
  i. the word
     - endings, etc

  ii. the sentence
     - how words fit together to form sentences
     - the functions of sentences
        promising
        warning
        informing
        ordering
  iii. the text
     - how texts function

Issues

The issues that must be resolved are:

- which grammar: that of the written language or that of the spoken language?;
- how to keep the emphasis on meaning rather than on form;
- how to have examples of structures which have already appeared in authentic use;
- how to link examples of structures to their social function so that learners can recognise and make changes given different audiences;
- are grammatical features easier to understand and re-use if the language is presented in small structured chunks, or should learners be exposed to authentic language and be asked to analyse selected aspects?;
- what constitutes 'difficulty' for a learner in terms of understanding and re-using grammatical features?

Strategies for writing

With these issues in mind the writer can try to resolve them by presenting core materials in a pupils' book and having complementary and supplementary materials in a looseleaf teacher's file. The latter can serve not only to explain how the writer envisages the materials in the pupils' book being used but also to provide materials which can be used to extend learners' competence by providing more practice or by extending the learner's contact with the target language as the situation requires.

Pupils' book

The pupils' book incorporates a number of fundamental principles. It seeks to:

- start from learners' needs and interests;
- include topics, settings and functions related to these needs and interests;
- include tasks that the learners may want to perform;
- analyse the tasks in terms of notions and functions and, at a beginner's level to choose one or two structures to fulfil one function;
- give examples of language which it is useful to learn to fulfil specific tasks, where possible taken from authentic sources. Criteria used in the selection of such language will include:
  ★ usefulness
  ★ naturalness
  ★ whether it is used spontaneously by native speakers

★ whether it is relatively easy/quick to learn accurately (Ex 1).

- include structures which may not be isolated for particular consideration, for the text(s) to remain natural and authentic (Ex 2);
- include sufficient examples to allow learners to make their own generalisations and hypotheses about language rules (Ex 3);
- work on the principle of deduction before overt explanation;
- include explanations only of language that learners need for their immediate use;
- use terminology only as needed (Ex 4).

Coin lecture

Vous craquez pour le look d'une vedette . . .
Lisez 'À la manière de Dana Dickson' et faites une liste de ce qu'elle aime mettre.

À la manière de Dana Dickson

Les petits riens font tout, côté 'look'. Dana aime tout ce qui est confortable: 'J'adore les jeans, les sweat-shirts, les T-shirts et les blousons de cuir. En hiver, j'aime porter les grands manteaux'.

Question couleurs, Dana a une passion pour le noir, mais elle aime aussi le rouge, le gris et le blanc.

Son péché mignon? – les chapeaux dont elle fait une collection.

Ex 1

R ***Opération Afrique verte***

Des sacs, des ceintures pour aider les enfants qui souffrent . . .

Les gens du Sahel manquent de nourriture.
L'association 'Afrique Verte' vend des sacs et des ceintures pour les aider.
Si vous achetez un sac de 35 francs, vous aiderez des enfants qui souffrent de la faim.

Et vous?
Donnez-vous des vêtements pour aider les enfants qui souffrent?
À quelles associations donnez-vous ces vêtements?
Quels vêtements avez-vous donnés?

DES SACS POUR AIDER L'AFRIQUE

Chaque année, des habitants du Sahel souffrent de la faim en raison de la sécheresse : l'argent manque pour transporter la nourriture d'une région à l'autre. Pour les aider, l'association Afrique Verte vend des "sacs-ceintures".
Si tu achètes un sac, ton argent servira à transporter 100 kilos de mil sur 400 kilomètres. Et avec ce petit sac qui se porte comme une ceinture, tu pourras transporter avec toi tous tes trésors !

Pour commander un sac, envoie un chèque de 35 F (30 F + 5 F de port) à : Afrique Verte, 49 rue de la Glacière, 75013 Paris.

Ex 2

E *Que vont-ils mettre?*

Écoutez et suivez.

1. Pour aller à la plage je vais mettre . . .

2. Pour aller en boum je vais mettre . . .

3. Pour aller au concert je vais mettre . . .

4. Pour aller au tennis je vais mettre . . .

5. Pour aller au collège je vais mettre . . .

6. Pour aller au parc d'attractions je vais mettre . . .

Ex 3

Flash-Grammaire

How to say what you are going to do

If you want to tell someone what you are going to do, going to wear, etc., there is an easy way to do it in French.

You simply use the verb *aller* together with the infinitive of the other verb which says what you are going to do. For example:

Je vais mettre un T-shirt. *I'm going to put on a T-shirt.*
Tu vas mettre ton pull? *Are you going to put on your pullover?*
Il va aller à la plage. *He's going to go to the beach.*
Elle va voir un film. *She's going to see a film.*
Nous allons regarder la télé. *We're going to watch television.*
Vous allez faire des courses? *Are you going to go shopping?*
Ils vont jouer au tennis. *They're going to play tennis.* (boys)
Elles vont nager. *They're going to swim.* (girls)

Ex 4

All the examples here are taken from *Spirale* by J Jenkins and B Jones (Hodder & Stoughton)

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Strategies for facilitating learning

Teacher's book

In this element of the course the principles on which the guidance to the teacher and the extension materials are based can be characterised as:

- communication of meaning is the prime goal
- focus on particular structures only if the task requires them
- emphasise particular structures which:
  - have a high communicative value
  - appear frequently in other contexts
  - are relatively quick and easy to learn accurately
- if there are many different structures within a text:
  - leave some to be learnt as vocabulary, for example
    - *je voudrais...*
    - *il me faut...*
    - *je suis allée...*
  - avoid explaining the grammatical structure if the learners do not need to manipulate the component parts
- leave grammatically complex topics until later

The interest of this for teachers should be that it gives some insight into the challenging task of syllabus design 'at a distance'. This will hopefully enable the reader both to reflect on his/her own practice and to make sounder judgements on the appropriateness (or otherwise) of current courses on the market.

SECTION 4

Application and implementation

Language awareness-raising programme, cross-curricular and interdepartmental co-operation important. ♦ Whole school language policy - time in other subject areas. ♦ How to organise a classroom so that individuals can move from implicit to explicit at the appropriate moment? ♦ Within the context of an activity 'difficult' bits of language are no more difficult than 'easy' bits. ♦ Differentiation: the key question for a MFL department. ♦ How to agree a sequence or hierarchy of grammar? ♦ Need for learner to have a go with confidence.

In this section we attempt to give some guidance on how to actually carry out some of the ideas which have been explored earlier in the book, to answer the perennial question -

- *'Yes but what do we do on Monday?'*

We could think of no-one better equipped to answer that very practical question than Mary Ryan, one of the authors of the Modern Foreign Languages Working Group report for England and Wales. Although her starting point is the actual legislation - the famous 'orders' on MFL - this is in a sense incidental to what she has to say. Whatever changes may be made to the rules in the future, the overall framework is likely to be with us for the rest of the century. In any case Mary's very practical advice on planning and implementing change will remain relevant whatever the nature of the framework.

For that same reason we hope that colleagues outside England and Wales will not regard what follows as irrelevant to them. Although the National Curriculum does not apply in Scotland, the national system there does allow for progression through specific levels of attainment, and the principles of grammar teaching as expressed in Mary Ryan's article apply to good practice in any UK school context. Whatever our present or future circumstances, language teachers will have to adapt ideas within some kind of statutory framework. What follows is a model of how such adaptation may take place.

Chapter 13

Grammar in the MFL National Curriculum

Mary Ryan

National Curriculum: the framework

When the Modern Foreign Languages Working Group was established in the Autumn of 1989 it was given clear terms of reference. This involved defining the modern languages curriculum in terms of attainment targets, levels of attainment, statements of attainment and programmes of study. This provided a considerable challenge to the working group which was asked to come up with its first draft in 2½-3 months. Representations were made and advice given from a variety of different sources. Developments in the Graded Objectives movement and at GCSE provided a firm foundation. There was however no agreed view of how learners acquire language nor of how progression can be defined. In wrestling therefore with the National Curriculum framework the working group had to consider amongst other things to what extent the role of grammar was to be made explicit in its proposals to the Secretary of State, both within the context of the curriculum and in relation to progression.

Consensus emerged very quickly. Opportunities for creativity, spontaneity and language manipulation were essential to enable children to make progress. In addition, it was clear that the role of the target language was crucial in providing the appropriate learning environment within the 'gale of English', so graphically described by Eric Hawkins. If these then were the key principles to underpin the report, it became inevitable that in order to achieve these goals learners would need knowledge and understanding of the rules of language to make progress. Grammar would therefore need to be defined in some way within the National Curriculum.

In the report of the Modern Foreign Languages Working Group published in October 1990, chapter 2 'Sounds, words and structures' gave the rationale for grammar within the National Curriculum:

> *'Like a living body, a language is far more than the sum of its parts. Learners need to remain in continuous contact with the living language. The central question for teachers is how far they should make learners consciously aware of the nature of the parts. The answer must depend on a further question: Is this going to help learners to learn the target language and use it spontaneously? This is the central aim of all modern language courses, and nothing should prevent its being pursued.*
>
> *In this view, learners make progress in a second language by continually extending their repertoire of chunks of language, but it is knowledge of the*

underlying rules which enables them to adapt these chunks to cope with the many and various situations in which they need to use them.'

This chapter also makes reference to a quotation by H G Widdowson in his article 'Knowledge of language and ability of use', in *Applied Linguistics*:

' ... communicative competence is not a matter of knowing rules for the composition of sentences and being able to employ such rules to assemble expressions from scratch as and when the occasion requires. It is much more a matter of knowing a stock of partially pre-assembled patterns, formulaic frameworks, and a kit of rules, so to speak, and being able to apply the rules to make whatever adjustments are necessary according to contextual demands. Communicative competence in this view is essentially a matter of adaptation, and rules are not generative but regulative and subservient.'

Grammar in the statutory orders and non-statutory guidance

In the programmes of study part 1 'Learning and using the target language', the requirement for pupils to have an understanding of the rules of the language is evident in section 3.

PROGRAMMES OF STUDY

3. **Developing language learning skills and awareness of language**

... in learning and using the target language, pupils should have regular opportunities to:

- develop their awareness of the different conventions of the written and spoken language;
- increase their awareness of different language forms and registers;
- use knowledge about language (linguistic patterns, structures, grammatical features and relationships, and compound words and phrases) to infer meaning and develop their own use of language ...

and in section 6:

6. **Developing the ability to learn independently**

... in learning and using the target language, pupils should have regular opportunities to:

- work independently of the teacher (on their own and with others);
- use a range of reference materials and resources (e.g. glossaries, exercise books, text books, bilingual and monolingual dictionaries, indexes, encyclopaedias;
- use computers (e.g. for language games, problem-solving, information retrieval, word-processing, drafting and redrafting, desktop publishing and communicating via electronic mail)...

ATTAINMENT TARGETS

The working group was then faced with the issue of how to provide for grammatical progression through the levels of attainment. The concept of allocating grammatical structures to particular levels was soon discarded. This could in no way apply across all nineteen National Curriculum languages and there was no foundation of research on which to base any such allocation. It is interesting to note, however, in the Non-statutory Guidance that table 14 outlines progression through the topic 'Special occasions'. In addition to identifying different tasks at different levels, topic content and language content are given as examples.

Topic: Special occasions

Level	Tasks	Topic content	Language content (possible examples)
1	Naming	Dates, names, saints	Nouns; dates; noun-phrases
2	Describing	Presents for a special occasion	Nouns; adjectives
3	Relating	A family meal for an occasion	Present tense of verbs, first person singular/plural
4	Sharing experiences	Survey of how other people celebrate birthdays	Second and third persons, plus negatives of verbs
5	Comparing	A religious event in other countries or communities	Plurals; making comparisons; adverbs
6	Planning	Invitations	Future tense; question forms; 'modal' verbs
7	Reporting	A recent school event (e.g. gala, school musical)	Past tense
8	Imagining	A 'round the world' tour won in a prize competition	Conditional tense
9	Reading and comparing	Different reports of a national feast day or holiday	Complex sentences
10	Debating	Expressing opinions, with reasons, on marriage, based on a video of a wedding celebration	Adapting language for different audiences

The Statutory Orders for modern foreign languages choose to keep the concept of grammar implicit to progression rather than explicit. The statements of attainment will therefore require an increasingly complex understanding and knowledge of structure. In a number of statements words such as 'adapt' are used to give the concept of moving from pre-learnt phrases and particular patterns to freer use of language. References to tenses past, present and future are given in AT2 Speaking level 6 and AT4 Writing level 6. In AT4 at level 5 correct word order is required and at level 6 the linking of sentences. In AT3 at level 3 pupils are required to recognise new words and phrases using knowledge of language and script and at level 4 to deduce meaning using knowledge of language and script. In AT2 at level 7 pupils are asked to speak with little error and again at level 9 with accurate pronunciation and at level 10 with little formal error. This is echoed in AT4

at level 7 asking pupils to redraft to achieve greater accuracy, and at level 10 to produce coherent and largely accurate pieces of writing.

Grammar in relation to the National Curriculum

The conference raised a number of key issues. It is interesting to consider these in the light of the National Curriculum programmes of study and attainment targets.

- **The importance of listening as a preparation for understanding of grammar**
  The emphasis within the National Curriculum proposals for use of the target language recognises and promotes the importance of listening input for pupils. The flexible inter-relationship of the attainment targets allows too for pupils to be exposed to very considerable amounts of listening material before being required to produce language themselves. There is no requirement for pupils to perform at the same level in all attainment targets. This gives therefore the flexibility to explore and develop the different attainment targets at a different pace.

- **Different learning styles**
  The programmes of study part 1 require teachers to use a variety of teaching styles and encourage pupils to learn language through a whole host of different activities. In addition, there is strong emphasis on the development of pupil independence in using reference materials, e.g. IT, dictionaries, self-access materials. This recognises the diversity of learning styles and different needs of different pupils.

- **Rules for purpose**
  One key tenet of the National Curriculum is that the learners' own interests should be the trigger for the use of language. The 'non-content specific' nature of the programmes of study means that teachers are free to develop the content as appropriate for their pupils. This then supports pupils in wishing and needing to acquire the rules of the language for purposes over which they have ownership. The National Curriculum also promotes the development of pupils' imagination and creativity to support and motivate them in their language learning.

- **Responding to learners' needs**
  The flexibility within the levels for teachers themselves to define the precise content of grammar helps to adapt to learners' individual needs and to introduce and develop language more spontaneously. It also allows teachers to adapt teaching strategies according to the requirements of different languages.

All of the above is based on the Statutory Orders published in March 1991. However, it must be recognised that factors outside the National Curriculum may in the long term influence the current structure.

The new proposals for English published in April 1993 give greater prominence to the definition of grammar as a separate strand within AT3 - Writing. Also, the working group established following the publication of the Dearing report will be reviewing the definition of levels and the nature of the programmes of study.

The National Curriculum - in practice

CHALLENGES

We are facing a number of challenges in relation to grammar and the National Curriculum. These are not insurmountable, but will continue to form part of the on-going debate in relation to the classroom. Some of these challenges might be identified as follows:

1. The reconciliation of progression in relation to functional language and progression in relation to grammatical structure.

2. Balancing fluency and confidence gained by pupils in recent years against accuracy in speaking and writing.

3. Teaching for the first time the full range of ability in the modern languages classroom.

4. The different learning styles of learners.

5. Terminology to be used in talking about language.

6. The development of teacher confidence in the target language as the medium for communication throughout the five years.

7. The debate on whether grammar should be taught implicitly or explicitly.

8. The constant 'gale of English' outside the classroom door.

9. Planning the above in a coherent fashion to ensure consistency across a modern languages department.

ISSUES AND CONSTRAINTS

When looking at how to meet these challenges we cannot, however, ignore the constraints facing individual modern languages departments. This is outlined clearly by Richard Johnstone in his contribution and will vary considerably from school to school. These might be identified as follows:

- **Time**
  Different departments have different amounts of time and the frequency of lessons will be crucial in supporting the development of grammar.

- **Accommodation**
  Stimulating and exciting lessons backed up by a whole variety of resources are not possible when teachers do not teach regularly in specialist rooms or indeed have to move constantly around the school.

- **Human resources**
  Where departments have non-specialist teachers of language who may only be teaching two or three classes, considerable support will be needed, and indeed even where departments are composed of specialists there is often a variety of experience and expertise. A fundamental re-appraisal of how grammar or rules are taught will demand a considerable amount of flexibility and open-mindedness on the part of staff.

- **Physical resources**
  Departments are dependent to a large extent on existing materials and hardware. Tight budgets may allow little flexibility.

- **The pupils**
  The previous experiences and expectations of pupils are a critical factor in reviewing classroom practice. This must be placed within the context of the ethos of the school. The most fertile ground is likely to be the youngest pupils and this is perhaps where a department should consider fundamentally re-appraising how it teaches.

The way forward - some thoughts

One key issue emerging from a host of exciting and dynamic ideas must be the needs of the learner. Any learner would benefit from continuity, consistency and planned progression if they are to make strides in language learning. This will demand collaboration across a modern languages department. Within this framework you may wish to consider some of the following:

PLANNING FOR PROGRESSION IN SCHEMES OF WORK

- look at what you do now
  - track the coursebook/scheme of work
  - when is the language introduced?
  - (how) are patterns established?
  - what opportunities are given for pupils to adopt and re-use language?
  - are the same expectations made of all pupils?

- identify gaps, inconsistencies, missed opportunities

- agree
  - **which** gaps you fill
  - **how** you do this

- identify
  - one 'area'
  - plan it into the scheme of work
  - trial it
  - evaluate how it worked

- plan for the 'formalisation' of rules through exposing pupils in a planned way to language long before these rules are explained.
  e.g. *j'ai fini mes devoirs*
  j'ai perdu mon stylo
  j'ai oublié mon cahier

- agree appropriate learning targets for children of different abilities
  - stock phrases
  - pattern ...
  - limited adaptation
  - extended adaptation
  - free rein

INDUCTION FOR LEARNERS

- Establish clear consistent policies across departments
  - terminology
  - accuracy
  - support

- agree what, how and when pupils record 'grammar' for their own *reference*
  - **what** is recorded?
  - **where** is it recorded?
  - **how** is it recorded?

- keep an on-going record of what they know/can use
  - books
  - files
  - IT
  - colour-coded
  - association with place on page
  - self-esteem

- establish cheap reference tools
  - verb tables - 'easy' / 'hard'
  - self-help through IT, cards, display, worksheets

  together with strategies and support for using these

- establish a repertoire of strategies for:
  - input
  - pattern
  - adaptation
  - creativity
  - song, etc

  explore how all can be applied across the ability range

- explore how 'display' can support grammar, for example through commercial posters, 'framework language' to support pupils' display work.

  e.g. *regardez FE a fait un sondage*
  nous avons visité une école en France - voici les photos
  hier sind unsere Bilder
  nous avons posé des questions à Monsieur le Proviseur

  - encourage pupils to devise it
  - agree patterns/consistency
  - pupils devise their own reference/display

- explore classroom management issues
  - whole class
  - groups
  - individuals

- agree how policy on target language will support 'grammar' input

- talk to the English department about their thoughts and ideas.

★★★

AND IN YOUR CLASSROOM TOMORROW

- Take one idea and try it out (with a class with whom it will work)

- Then try another or transfer that idea to another class.

- Plan to share that with colleagues (after half-term: what you've done in class and key ideas from the conference).

FINALLY A FEW THOUGHTS INSPIRED BY DISCUSSIONS AND READING AROUND THE SUBJECT

Learning grammar works when ...

- the activity is fun in its own right, e.g. songs, games, etc;
- learners are learning to say something they want to say;
- learners are given plenty of time to absorb new language through hearing it;
- learners may also have the chance to see and read a lot of language and absorb that;
- patterns are practised repeatedly;
- once patterns are internalised, learners are given the opportunity to do something with language, i.e. going beyond the basic role-play or the basic letter;
- teachers have a very clear idea of exactly what they want pupils to know;
- teachers have a clear idea of what targets they are setting for pupils of different abilities;
- the development of pupils' insight into pattern is supported visually, for example, through:
  - colour-coding;
  - display - for example different coloured objects on different walls;
  - realia - different objects coming out of different colour boxes;
  - alternative visual representations, for example concentric circles;
  - constantly doing and practising and redoing things with language;
  - doing activities which allow them to physically touch bits of language on card, overhead projector, etc;
  - building up and keeping their own record of what they know in a systematic way;
  - the sensitive and informed use of Information Technology to support pupils either on an individual basis or on a class basis.

SECTION 5

The historical perspective

(8)

III.

Mundus.

The World.

Cœlum

(9)

The Heaven 1.
hath fire,
and Stars.

The Clouds 2.
hang
in the air.

Birds 3.
flie
under the Clouds.

Fiſhes 4.
ſwim
in the water.

The earth
hath Hills 5.
Woods 6.
Fields 7.
Beaſts 8.
And Men 9.

Thus,
the greateſt
bodies
of the World,
the four Elements,
are full of their own
Inhabitants.

Cœlum 1.
habet *Ignem*,
& *Stellas*.

Nubes 2.
pendent
in *Aëre*.

Aves 3.
volant
ſub Nubibus.

Piſces 4.
natant
in *Aquâ*.

Terra
habet *Montes*, 5.
Sylvas, 6.
Campos, 7.
Animalia, 8.
Homines, 9.

Ita,
ſunt plena
Habitatoribus ſuis,
quatuor *Elementa*,
Mundi
maxima
Corpora.

IV. The

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

In this final section we return to Eric Hawkins. If we are (rightly) concerned about what we are to do next Monday, we should not allow this to dominate our thoughts and blot out wider considerations. It is perhaps only when we can see our immediate preoccupations as part of a historical development that we can begin to make sense of them, and in a true sense to keep them in perspective. This may also help us ourselves to 'internalise' some of the multitude of practical ideas, recipes and 'rules' that the middle sections of the book have contained.

At the very least it may be encouraging to know that the debate over using the target language is not new.

Chapter 14

Percept before precept

Eric Hawkins

'Percept before precept'
(John Amos Comenius 1592-1670)

Grammar - a historical perspective

The brief that I have been given is to try to put our theme of grammar in language teaching into perspective. There is, first, the perspective of history, if only to remind ourselves of the antiquity of our present dilemmas.

To quote Kelly's (1969) classic study: '*The total corpus of ideas accessible to language teachers has not changed basically in 2,000 years. What have been in constant change are the ways of building methods from them.*'

But I also want to try to see the history against another perspective, that of the new challenge of the National Curriculum. None of the foreign language teachers down the ages, whom Kelly lists, ever had to face the challenge that we face: they never met, in their classes, more than a select minority of quite able learners. As recently as the 1960s only 25% of 11-year-olds were offered a foreign language. And they were an élite, of proven intelligence, chosen for grammar schools largely on the 11+ test of verbal reasoning. In other words, what Rutherford calls their '*grammatical consciousness*' (1987) was well developed. By comparison, the 75% of newcomers who entered foreign language classrooms with the comprehensive reorganisation of the 1960s (most of whom dropped out at 14+ in the 1980s, but must now stay with the subject for five years), may possess, at best, only a tenuous grasp of the mother tongue, especially of its written forms.

To quote the late Professor Corder (1978):

> '*It is somehow counter-intuitive to suggest that the second language learner starts from scratch, that he is in effect learning language all over again. Does the fact that he already possesses language and is a language user count for nothing?*'

Did tenuous grasp of the mother tongue, and with it an uncertain 'grammatical consciousness', help to explain the haemorrhage of learners from French classes at age 14, which the National Curriculum regulations are intended to staunch?

Our two perspectives will, I hope, help to throw light on each other. I begin with the history.

Our discipline has seen three great turning points. These were:

- the mid 17th century;
- the Great Reform, 1880 to 1914;
- the 1960s and 70s.

The 17th century

The 17th century was remarkable for the passionate interest taken in language by all sectors of society. It showed itself in attempts to construct an artificial 'lingua franca', in which to transact the new Renaissance knowledge, best known of which is probably the 'Real Character' of Bishop Wilkins, brother-in-law of Oliver Cromwell. Another sign was the proliferation of private shorthands, on which Comenius commented when he visited London in 1641. Samuel Pepys was only one of many who invented his own system. A third feature was the great interest in codes and ciphers, fostered by the Civil War and the need for secrecy at a time when communities were tragically divided against each other.

The two main languages studied in Tudor times were French and Latin. England was then emerging from being for several centuries what Lambley (1920) has described as a trilingual society. French, Latin and English were used side by side, each having its own specific role in the community. French was (since the Norman Conquest) the language of the judiciary and the nobility, Latin the language of religion and the lingua franca of Europe for both religious and secular purposes.

Lambley cites over 150 manuals for the teaching of French published in the 16th and 17th centuries. It was mostly taught to the aristocracy by private tutors, or learned by study abroad, but it was also available in the private (dissenting) academies, whose curriculum included navigation and book-keeping, for commercial apprentices from the new middle class.

THE 'TRIVIUM' - A COHERENT LANGUAGE APPRENTICESHIP

The more prestigious schools were the grammar schools, established by Royal Charter, few of which offered French. Their main function was to teach Latin, as a vocational subject, essential for the service of church and state. Latin was taught as an integral part of the *trivium*, of grammar/logic/rhetoric. This was the linguistic foundation on which the *quadrivium*, the remaining four liberal arts (sciences and music) could later be studied at university. When Winchester College opened its doors it had been proud to announce that it proposed to be a 'trivial' school, it would teach the '*trivium*'.

At its best this meant that language was given a central place as the foundation on which the rest of the education could build, as part of a coherent apprenticeship in language. The contrast with our present incoherent and haphazard treatment of this central human characteristic of language is marked. As HMI wrote in their (1977) document on the Curriculum: '*Anyone, by following a group of pupils through a day in a secondary school, can prove that their language experiences are largely a matter of chance.*' What they observed were teachers of English, foreign languages, Latin and community languages all operating in adjacent classrooms, yet never entering each other's room to hear what their colleagues are saying about language. Only the pupil,

trudging philosophically from room to room, heard the various discordant messages and struggled to make some synthesis out of them.

INDUCTIVE VS. DEDUCTIVE LEARNING

The *trivium*, though coherent as a programme, was taught until the 17th century by deductive, prescriptive methods. But in the 17th century, following Francis Bacon's lead, Comenius and others advocated an inductive approach.

Inductive learning meant: first observe the facts, aided in the sciences by the new telescopes and microscopes, and then **induce** the rules which seem to explain the observed facts, rules which will remain valid only until they are falsified by fresh evidence. When applied to language learning, the inductive method meant, in Comenius's phrase: 'Percept before precept'. In his *Methodus linguarum novissima* (1646) he proposed an inductive method of teaching Latin since:

> '*... children need to be given many examples and things they can see and not abstract rules of grammar*'

... and ... in *Didactica magna* (1632/1657):

> '*All languages are easier to learn by practice than by rules.*'

We should not overstate Comenius's position. He did see the need for rules. In *Didactica magna* he went on to say:

> '*But rules assist and strengthen the knowledge derived from practice.*'

And, as he grew older, and as Latin ceased to be widely used outside school, his position on rules hardened.

IMMERSION LEARNING TO SUPPLEMENT GRAMMAR?

However, the grammar schools did not rely only on the *trivium* for Latin learning. They had a second string to their bow, in immersion learning, outside the classroom. Historians differ as to how far immersion went in the Tudor grammar school. Charlton (1965) quotes one view put graphically by Goldschmidt:

> '*Boys were not taught Latin; they were taught in Latin; they were not allowed to utter a single vernacular word whilst at school ... no teaching of any kind in English existed anywhere before 1550 or thereabouts ... If Shakespeare crept unwillingly to school he did so because there he would be confronted by a master who spoke nothing but Latin and would birch him if he spoke an English word to another boy.*'
>
> (*The printed book of the Renaissance*)

Many school statutes support this view. The charter of King James Grammar School, Knaresborough, North Yorkshire, stipulated that,

> '*after three years in the schools, any boy caught using English, even in the playground, was to be beaten by the Headmaster.*'

However, Charlton himself takes a more cautious view, arguing that the

difficulties of implementing such statutes must have been enormous. He concludes:

> *'... the prohibition of English speaking ... must be ... interpreted as referring to those hours of school life devoted to the speaking of Latin and not as an absolute prohibition.'*

In the few grammar schools that did offer French, immersion seems to have been the rule. At Southampton Grammar School in 1573, Watson (1909) tells us boys were compelled to speak French even at meal times:

> *'he who spoke English, though only a sentence, was obliged to wear a fool's cap and stand aside and watch the others eat.'*

The private tutors engaged by aristocratic families also believed in immersion, notably the great John Locke, father of empiricism. He defended the method in *Some thoughts concerning education* (1690):

> *'I would fain have anyone name to me that Tongue that anyone can learn to speak as he should by rules of Grammar. Languages were not made by rules of Art but by Accident and the Common Use of the people. And he that will speak them well has no other rule than that, nor anything to trust but his memory and the habit of speaking ...'*

J A COMENIUS - *ORBIS SENSUALIUM PICTUS*

This was, of course, to beg several questions, to which we shall return. Comenius' great contribution to immersion learning was to provide, in his lovely textbook, the *Orbis sensualium pictus (Pictures of the visual world)* (1659), the first manual for the immersion learning that the school statutes required.

Ludi Pueriles.

Boyes-Sports.

John Amos Comenius was the greatest in a long line of protestant, migrant language teachers. He was the exiled leader of the Moravian church, one of the foremost Latin scholars of the age, who spoke four languages fluently. He had met John Locke in Holland when both men were in exile from their own countries.

Comenius wrote his books under great difficulties, moving from place to place, persecuted and uprooted by religious bigotry and the changing fortunes of the Thirty Years War. He lost two young wives in succession and saw his children die in infancy, as the family trekked from place to place. The loss of his children, whom he had hoped to be able to teach himself, affected him keenly and shines through the tenderness of his introduction to the *Orbis pictus*. In this book Comenius takes the learner through everyday activities, playground games, getting in the harvest, brewing ale, making a chair, illustrated on each page by a superb woodcut picture (improved by metal engravings in Charles Hoole's London edition), in which each stage of the activity, and its appropriate Latin phrase, is identified by a number.

Mercatura.

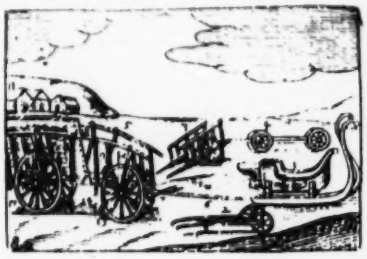
Merchandizing.

The book took up and developed the ideas pioneered in the *Methodus novissima*: the use of pictures (*'pictures are what most easily impress themselves on the child's mind, to remain lasting and real'*), of a reduced, maximally functional vocabulary; trust in multiple examples rather than abstract rules

and setting out the mother tongue and foreign language side by side in complete sentences.

Charles Hoole, who translated the book from German to English and used it in his London Grammar School, tells us that it was intended that pupils would copy the pictures and colour them, to help their learning, but he found he had to stop that because of the expense of buying books for all his pupils. (Each volume, he tells us, cost five shillings, because of the illustrations - over £20 in present terms!)

Carriages. *Vehicula.*



INNATE 'ACQUISITION' VS. LEARNING: MUDDLE ABOUT THE LAD

At the foot of the title page of the *Orbis pictus*, Comenius quotes Aristotle's famous phrase, adopted as the slogan of the empiricist philosophers led by John Locke:

'*Nothing reaches the mind except via the senses*',

that is, no knowledge is innate. The infant's mind at birth is a *tabula rasa*.

Noam Chomsky, in *Cartesian linguistics* (1966), mounts a brilliant attack on this view. He claims that the notion of the infant's mind as a *tabula rasa* is incompatible with the evidence of language acquisition, and instead he postulates his theory of an inborn, pre-programmed, Language Acquisition Device (LAD), or 'grammar searching mechanism'. The debate is worth a moment's detour, because it touches directly on our theme. Empiricism and inductive learning certainly liberated European thinking from the strait-jacket of authority based on texts that must not be challenged. This is typified by the aged Galileo forced by the Inquisition (1633) to recant on his knees the truth his telescope had shown him, that the Earth moves around the Sun, because the Council of Trent 80 years earlier had ruled that the Earth is the centre of the universe and does not move.

You remember how, as he shuffled back into the crowd on his knees, after pretending to agree with the inquisitors, the old man muttered into his beard: '*Eppur si muove!*' which might be translated: '*I know the damn thing moves!*' Empiricism took Galileo's side. But, as Chomsky argues, empiricism went too far, in denying any innate knowledge. The infant's mind is not a *tabula rasa*. Innate pre-programming there must be.

But Chomsky, in his turn, went too far in discounting the effect of nurture on language development and claiming that children all achieve a similar competence in their mother tongue. Ill-considered application of the notion of an innate LAD to foreign language learning has led to a lot of muddled thinking. It is obviously very relevant to our consideration of the role of grammar. Let me pursue it a bit further.

Chomsky's account of the LAD had been convincingly challenged by Bruner (1983). He accepts that the evidence is strong for some kind of innate LAD, but he shows, in his Oxford studies of children's language acquisition, that the powers of the LAD are limited; a LASS is equally necessary, LASS meaning Language Acquisition Support System. Language support, for the fortunate child, comes from the family or extended family. Without this

support, Bruner claims, the LAD can at best enable children to acquire what he calls mere *communicative competence*. For school purposes something more is needed. Bruner calls it *analytical competence*, the ability to turn language in upon itself and gain an insight into how language works. Analytic competence is not innate, but has to be learned.

Professor Donaldson (1978) makes the same point:

> *'... the normal child's thinking is directed outwards on the real, meaningful, shifting, distracting world. What is going to be required for success in our educational system is that he should learn to turn language and thought in upon themselves ... the first step is the step of conceptualising language - becoming aware of it as a separate structure, freeing it from its embededness in events. Some children come to school with this step already taken or at least with the movement already begun. They come with an enormous initial advantage.'*

The relevance of this for foreign language learning has been shown by work on aptitude testing such as that of my colleague Peter Green at York (1975). His language aptitude test, shown to be highly predictive of success in mastering the foreign language in school, measures something very close to Bruner's analytical competence and Donaldson's 'becoming aware of language structure'.

It follows, I think, that we should revise our thinking about the relevance of Chomsky's LAD to adolescent foreign language learning. Instead of postulating an innate 'grammar searching mechanism' (Chomsky's term), which does not alter as the child grows up, and contrasting this innate, subconscious mechanism with deliberate learning, we ought rather to see the innate LAD of infancy as developing and changing into a more complex learning mechanism, a LAD 'Mk 2', or, as I would call it, a LAP, or Language Awareness Processor. It is an amalgam of the innate LAD with all the accumulation of expectations set up by learning the mother tongue, and learning about the world, that the 11-year-old brings to the foreign language classroom.

A decade ago Slobin (1979) suggested that we should shift the focus from the idea of a reference grammar, internalised by the learner and consulted as need be, to what he calls **processing strategies**, which may involve more than grammatical rules:

> *'Grammars do not describe ongoing processing, though grammatical units (may be) involved in such processing ... the listener ... is constantly trying to build an internal representation for the sentences he receives, relying on all available information ... including knowledge of the world, knowledge of the speaker, etc ...'*

We therefore face two challenges:

- to define more clearly the **adolescent's** language processor, and how it differs from the infantile LAD;
- to help those many children who do not draw a good ticket in the lottery

of home circumstances, fail to acquire an analytical competence in the mother tongue and so do not bring an effective LAP into the foreign language classroom.

We must return to this central problem.

THE NEED FOR IMMERSION FORGOTTEN

To resume the story of Latin: in practice, 17th century arguments for inductive approach to Latin foundered with the decline in its use as the lingua franca outside the classroom. (Newton was the last great English scientist who wrote his magnum opus in Latin in 1687.)

Although immersion outside school was no longer available, Latin remained the central element of the grammar school curriculum. As it was no longer a vocational subject, its position had to be justified on other grounds. It was now found to be a training for the mind, and, as such, it was again taught deductively. Comenius' order was reversed. Precept now came first and sentences were constructed logically in accordance with the rules.

Meanwhile, as modern foreign languages began to enter the curriculum of the public schools led by Shrewsbury and Rugby, the Victorian foundations catering for the new affluent middle class, the only teachers available were converts from the classics or immigrant native speakers. They tended to imitate, in foreign language classes, the deductive methods, and emphasis on written forms, that were familiar in the classics.

The Great Reform (1880-1914)

So it was that the pioneers of the Great Reform, our next turning-point, had to fight Comenius' battle all over again.

The Reform movement, led mainly by teachers of German, from which the Modern Language Association sprung in 1892, had considerable success until the setback of the outbreak of war in 1914, which took the young, enterprising teachers from their schools and unleashed in the country a virulent anti-German prejudice.

FROM EYE LEARNING TO EAR LEARNING

I have time only to discuss what I take to be the two salient planks of the Great Reform. The first was the case for what Sweet (1899) called 'the living philology'; this meant teaching the spoken language. The reformers advocated what came to be called the Direct Method, use of the foreign language in dialogue in class, exploiting objects and activities to stimulate meaningful use of the language.

In their plea to bring the spoken language into the classroom, the reformers were encouraged by the invention of Edison's wax cylinder phonograph in 1878, and by recent progress in the new science of phonetics. They all agreed with the formidable Dr Jowett, master of Balliol, addressing the Association of French Teachers in 1887: '*Nature taught us to begin with the ear and not with the eye*'. Sweet, the leading phonetician of the age, friend and mentor in phonetics of Bernard Shaw, whose Professor Higgins in *Pygmalion* is largely based on Sweet, accepted the logic of the case for learning through the ear. He and his fellow reformers advocated a thorough grounding in listening, supported by use of the new International Phonetic Alphabet. Something of Sweet's enthusiasm

for this approach survived into the 1920s. If I may be allowed a brief personal testimony, when I began to learn French in the junior school of Liverpool Institute in 1924 at the age of nine, we were taught for the whole of the first year solely using IPA phonetic script, in which we wrote our simple dialogues, songs, etc so that we could practise them at home, and in which we did simple *dictées* [di:k'te] in class. One by one, however, the enterprising disciples of the Great Reform lost heart, in face of the conservatism of the universities, which determined teachers' degree courses and largely controlled school examinations. And the universities were committed to the written language.

THE LEATHES REPORT 1918

They had been confirmed in their stance by the report of the National Commission set up by the Prime Minister in 1915 to enquire into the whole question of modern language studies in school. The chairman was Stanley Leathes, a Cambridge History don. The Commission's report in 1918 largely set the agenda of teaching and examining for the next four decades.

On the question of the spoken language the report was unequivocal:

> *'Direct Method has certain inevitable dangers ... if attention is concentrated too exclusively upon the spoken language, too much is apt to fall on the teacher, the contribution of the pupil is apt to be slight ... students are not so well grounded, knowledge is superficial and inaccurate ... if the study of modern languages is to earn its due estimation, the highest possible accuracy and scholarship must be systematically cultivated.'*

Not unnaturally, schools followed the universities in paying minimal attention to speech. It is perhaps forgotten how little spoken language was transacted in classrooms or demanded in exams until the early 1960s.

THE ARRIVAL OF TAPE RECORDING

This situation was violently jolted in the 1960s by the arrival, first of the tape recorder, then by material to use on it, audio-visual courses from France, audio-lingual materials from USA, and then home-made materials from the Nuffield Project.

Examining Boards also began to give serious attention to the oral element in the exams. However, though the swing to the spoken language was quite violent, very little attempt was made to prepare young listeners. It is not surprising that when Burstall studied the pupils' reaction to the brave 1960s Primary French Pilot Project (1970), she found that a constant cry from the pupils she observed was: '*we detest the tape recorder*'. The sudden unprepared exposure to French native speakers on tape, discouraged the young learners.

This may seem to take us away from our theme of grammar. In fact, listening and insight into grammar are closely linked, and we shall revert to this link in a moment.

Grammar/ translation: the dragon to be slain

The other main theme of the Great Reform touches grammar more directly. The reformers' main fire was directed against the deductive method known as grammar/translation.

Gouin (1880) called it the 'dragon' to be slain. His now legendary analogy of the Emperor of China is perhaps worth quoting again:

> '*The grammar/translation method says to its disciples: Here is a hammer, a square and a chisel (he means, of course, dictionary, grammar book, etc) and there lies a block of marble (i.e. the foreign language) ... You will now set to work and carve from this block the statue of the Emperor of China, whom you have never seen, and it must be a good likeness.*'

But, though the attack on the grammar/translation method was trenchant, the reformers were less united and less convincing about what was to replace it. Three proposals emerge from the Great Debate:

'IMITATE THE CHILD'? FOUR REASONS WHY NOT TO

1. Best known is Gouin's answer: imitate the child; by this method, as he put it, '*language learning could be as natural as learning to fly is to a bird*'. Gouin's naive analysis, however, was blown sky high by the austere scholar Sweet. '*The fundamental objection to the Natural Method is that it puts the adult into the position of an infant, which he is no longer capable of utilising, and at the same time does not allow him to make use of his own special advantages.*' As Gouin's 'imitate the child' has recently been given new currency, and contributed to muddled thinking about grammar, it may be timely to recall four factors which make it impossible for the adult to replicate the infant's learning experience:

   a. The infant acquiring the mother tongue is, at the same time, making a series of exciting discoveries about the world. Think how the child, beginning to count, learning how the calendar works, naming the parts of the body, etc is not only learning language but making exciting discoveries about how the world works. These discoveries, once made, cannot be unlearnt. Adult foreign language learning is quite differently motivated.
   b. As for the grammar, linguists have described the successive grammars of childhood, beginning with the oft-quoted, two-word patterns like *all-gone shoe* proceeding by successive approximations to the adult grammar. The process occupies seven years on average. The adolescent foreign language learner cannot replicate these approximations to the adult grammar; his informants do not use, and do not expect to hear, what Bruner calls 'child's talk'.
   c. Think also how, for adolescent foreign language learners, the deeply ingrained speech habits of the mother tongue constantly challenge the new, fragile speech patterns, in that 'gale of English' that blows outside the foreign language classroom door. The child getting the mother tongue faces no such compelling challenges.
   d. Finally, recall our earlier observation that the adolescent's language processor (LAP) is a very much more complex mechanism than the infant's innate LAD that Chomsky describes. If Sweet's dismissal of Gouin's naive claim had been listened to we might have been spared much recent muddle in discussion of 'acquisition' and 'learning'. Getting the L2 in class, in four short weekly lessons, is quite unlike the infant's subconscious acquisition of the mother tongue. There are now several modes of cognition in play. Deliberate learning now complicates the process at every stage. To quote Stevick (1982):

> *'... the modes of getting a new language which are available to the learner are not exactly two in number. What we have been calling acquisition and learning now become only the ends of a continuum which rests on a single process.'*

Across this continuum the learner's strategies range, subtly interacting with each other. Deliberately learned routines can become subconscious, available without thinking one moment, but requiring deliberate recall the next. Explicit and implicit knowledge of grammar rules weave in and out of each other, while comparisons with the mother tongue are never far away. The cry 'imitate the child' is a gross oversimplification.

GRAMMAR AS A VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY

2. A wiser proposal came from the eminent Danish philosopher of language, Jespersen (1904). He called it 'inventional grammar'. He envisaged the learner inducing his own grammar rules, building up his own representation of the structure (and his own meta-language to describe it) as he advances into the language. Sweet seemed to pour scorn on the idea but, as Jespersen points out, proceeded himself to suggest something similar. Nothing came of the suggestion at the time but the idea of an 'exploratory grammar', grammar as a linguistic voyage of discovery, has been developed imaginatively by Jones (1984).

A 'FUNCTIONAL' GRAMMAR

3. The third proposal also had to wait 100 years until its day came. Again it came from Sweet. He suggested that in place of the traditional grammar whose content is arranged under formal categories (verb, adverb, preposition, etc) the grammar should group items by functional categories. Such a grammar would stand in relation to the traditional grammar as the thesaurus stands in relation to the alphabetically arranged dictionary. The only attempt made to implement his radical proposal was Palmer's (1917) 'ergonic chart' of the French language, a complex of boxes within boxes, like a Chinese puzzle. It was left, of course, for Wilkins (1976) in the 1970s to work out a taxonomy of functions/notions. Wilkins' proposal for a functional syllabus had the advantage of being based more firmly on an analysis of the likely linguistic needs of the learner, than Palmer's chart which had to rely solely on intuition.

Recent history

I come then to more recent history. Many readers will know this better than I and I have space only to mention some themes which were further developed at the conference.

THE SWING TO 'EAR' LEARNING

First is the swing of the pendulum in the 60s and 70s back from eye to ear learning, this time encouraged by the availability of the marvellous new recorded cassette and later the video.

Though the eminent phonetician MacCarthy (1978) repeated Sweet's warning '*Education of the ear is a prerequisite of successful language learning*', few teachers listened.

I promised to come back to the relevance of this for our discussion of grammar. It now seems clear that the difficulty that Burstall's pupils had with listening to French at native speed on the tape recorder was due to two deficiencies:

- limitations in the Short Term Memory capacity of young learners;
- lack of clear expectation as to what they were to listen for. Expectation is vital for listening.

STM AND GRASP OF PATTERN IN LANGUAGE

The importance of limited STM capacity was shown by Miller in his famous paper *The magical number seven* (1956). STM capacity can be expanded if the listener can impose some pattern on the incoming message. The quicker the pattern is grasped, the greater the capacity of the STM, so the more chance the learner has to process the message. Learning to listen, therefore, and insight into pattern are closely linked, and adolescents differ enormously, as our research at York showed, in both these capacities. This suggests that some kind of **preparation for foreign language learning** might be valuable, what the French call a '*propédeutique*'. And it is precisely this idea that has recently excited interest among researchers at the Institut National de Recherche Pédagogique in Paris.

Luc, head of the foreign language section at the Institut, and Bailly, a psycholinguist from the Sorbonne (1992), have described an experiment in Parisian schools in which teachers deliberately set out to raise pupils' grammatical consciousness, or as the French say, '*leur prise de conscience des phénomènes linguistiques*' as a preliminary to the learning of particular grammar points. This work compels us to re-think the current dogma that all 'talking about language' in class is waste of precious time, which ought rather to be spent in 'talking **in** the language'. The choice may not be so simple.

HOW TO ENCOURAGE GRASP OF PATTERN - ROLE OF MOTHER TONGUE

In a later paper (1992), Luc discusses the way in which the learner's internalised representation of how the language works plays a crucial role. She accepts that the teacher must begin by encouraging, by all possible means, spontaneous, active transactions in the foreign language with as much meaning for the learner as possible. But she goes on:

> '*Nevertheless ... the successive language acquisitions the child thus makes ... will not suffice, by themselves, to equip him to understand and to produce utterances that are new. As soon as the child moves out of fairly stereotyped situations, of greetings, introductions, stating wishes ... in which he repeats phrases already met ... great difficulties appear. Knowledge of words or ready made formulae are but a feeble help for expression and comprehension in new contexts ... What is essential now is an accurate representation of how language works, notably and specifically, how it relates to the ways in which the mother tongue works, because for most learners the mother tongue is the only reference point available.*'

It is this accurate representation of how the foreign language works, in simple terms accessible to the adolescent learner, that our *propédeutique* should provide. A very similar analysis is offered in the NC Modern Foreign Languages Working Group Report (1990), quoting Henry Widdowson:

> '*... communicative competence is not a matter of knowing rules for the composition of sentences ... from scratch ... it is much more a matter of knowing a stock of pre-assembled patterns, formulaic frameworks, ... and*

> *being able to apply the rules to make whatever adjustments are necessary according to contextual demands. Communicative competence in this view is essentially a matter of adaptation, and rules are not generative but regulative and subservient.'*

The French researchers, looking for an explanation of the differences observed in pupils' ability to grasp pattern and adapt them to new contexts, endorse the view of Cummins (1980), that there is a certain cognitive competence acquired via the mother tongue which can be applied in the attack on the foreign language.

NEED FOR A 'PREPARATION' FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING

I am therefore arguing for a *propédeutique*, a preparation for foreign language learning, with two aims:

- to help pupils hear confidently and then grasp the pattern of new language they meet;
- to help them to process the patterns they recognise to suit new contexts.

These questions are taken further in the chapter on Language Awareness.

I would make one suggestion at this point: I cannot quote hard evidence, but my hunch is that an underlying understanding, or 'grammatical consciousness', must facilitate insight into pattern and processing. I am reassured by the opinion of the eminent psychologist Hilgard, author of '*Theories of learning*' (quoted by Stern, 1983):

> *'What is the place of understanding and insight? Some things are learned more readily if we know what we are about. We are better off as travellers if we can understand a timetable or a road map ... but we can form vowels satisfactorily without knowing how to place our tongues, we can read without being aware of our eye movements ... because all learning is to some extent cognitively controlled, the distinction between blind learning and learning with understanding becomes one of degree...'*

This, I think, goes to the heart of our problem. We have to examine carefully which parts of the learning tasks come into which category.

NEED FOR 'SERIOUS LANGUAGE' (REAL 'SPEECH ACTS'): REQUIRING INTENSIVE IMMERSION

In conclusion, may I add an important point which has so far been entirely neglected by those responsible for shaping the National Curriculum.

However effective we manage to make our *propédeutique* and raise pupils' 'grammatical awareness' and however confidently our pupils can process the new patterns, there is still another essential step to take before we can claim to offer a foreign language for all. Pupils must be given the fullest opportunity to engage in meaningful interaction with native speakers, about things that matter to them, with real **intention to mean**. That is, they must transact real speech acts, not what Searle (1969) called 'non-serious language' (his description of the dialogue of the traditional foreign language classroom). I would be willing to wager that for every reader of this book, the crucial factor in his or her spoken mastery of the foreign language was the opportunity to complement classroom learning with study visits abroad. The analogy with swimming is not exact but

will serve. However useful the preliminary exercises on the bank, the apprentice only gets to swim by **getting into the water**. For all of us who wanted to **speak** the language, our swimming bath was the foreign country, where the spoken language lives. It was not always so. When the **written** language was the sole object of study, pupils defended themselves with the pen. Their swimming bath was in the school or city library, not across the Channel. Libraries were freely accessible to keen pupils, regardless of home background. Success or failure did not depend, so much as it does now, on parental backing, on the chance to get abroad or to invite foreign guests into the home. Emphasis on spoken language has exacerbated the tendency, already noted in 1970 in the Schools Council *Working paper 28*, for our subject to become more and more a preserve of pupils from encouraging homes (we should remember that many working-class homes do offer encouragement; it is not a simple class division and stereotypes may be misleading).

But the home influence is crucial. The National Curriculum, with its obligatory five years of foreign language study, is intended to lead to much greater take up in the 6th form, by those pupils who have traditionally dropped their language at 14+. If this brave hope is not to be a sham for many pupils, some way must be found to give these newcomers to 5th and 6th form work the same opportunity that we privileged learners enjoyed, to **swim in the water**.

Fortunately, we now have marvellous technical aids, in the video and the satellite, which can bring the spoken language nearer. But these must be harnessed to intensive immersion sessions. The challenge we face is to provide, for the **whole** age group, intensive immersion experience such as we enjoyed, and without which none of us would be here.

Questions to answer: a fresh look at grammar?

May I conclude by listing some questions which seem to follow from my attempt, in the space available, to put our theme into perspective:

- Have we been too inclined to apologise for mentioning grammar?
  Teachers of other difficult subjects, like physics, chemistry, music, etc do not apologise for examining how their discipline works.

- But at the same time, possibly because of this muddled failure to accept that grammar is central to language learning, have we failed to discriminate clearly enough the different grammatical needs and interests of different learners?
  Instead of lumping together, under the blanket of 'grammar', the wide range of ways in which language is 'rule governed' behaviour, ought we to try to distinguish more sensitively the different ways in which pattern and structure can be explored? This becomes even more important as we face the new 4th and 5th National Curriculum years, in which the range of ability and aptitude will be greater than anything we have previously experienced.

- For example, should we be exploring much more carefully the difference between a grammar of **comprehension** and a grammar of **production**?
  Production is the acid test of language mastery, but will some learners be content to settle for comprehension only? Increasingly, 'bi-lingual'

dialogue and correspondence, each side using its own language, may become the rule. Comprehension may often require only a simple semantic labelling of a few items. Moreover, comprehension makes demands only on **recognition memory**, not on **recall**. We can recognise five times as much as we can recall. Is it not time we began to plan for alternative 'comprehension' only papers at 16+ and 18+?

- Have we distinguished clearly enough harder grammar rules from easier ones? In a recent closely argued paper examining what is meant by 'knowing a grammar rule', Green and his German colleague Hecht of Munich (1992) suggest that teachers might classify rules according to their degree of **difficulty**. And they distinguish usefully between a grammar rule and an explanation. They write: '*Semantic categories like aspect are probably best represented as explanations rather than as rules, with learners' attention drawn to how they operate in longer contexts.*'

  To give a simple example of an aspect problem met in both Spanish and English grammar (not from the Green and Hecht paper): it is possible to say: 'I am reading it' (*lo estoy leyendo*) but not '*I am knowing it' (**lo estoy sabiendo*). Why not? The traditional grammar rule labels 'know' as a 'stative' verb and tell us that stative verbs are not used with the (so-called) 'progressive' form. But this explains nothing. The alert learner wants to know **why**. Recent Spanish grammars are more helpful. They explain that to call the form 'I am reading' 'progressive' is a misnomer. In fact, 'is -ing' implies that the activity concerned will not last; it is, by implication, going to be 'completed'. Similarly, while most verbs (like 'read') only make sense when their activity is completed, so they can rightly be used in an aspect that implies 'complete predication', a few other verbs (like 'know', 'understand', etc) carry no implication of ending, so for semantic reasons their use with a verb form that implies completion ('I am knowing') is unacceptable.

  Some learners will demand an **explanation**; others may be content with the simplest **description**. Have we looked carefully enough at these different learners' grammatical needs?

GRAMMAR AS EXPLORATION

- Can we do more to encourage grammar as **exploration**?
  It may help to give a simple example, concerning French irregular verbs. The underlying pattern, explaining so many of the spellings of French irregular verbs, is of a vowel shift when the tonic stress falls on the root vowel (just as in the Spanish 'root-changing' verbs, like '*querer, quiero, queremos, quieren*'). So, in French, '*vouloir, je veux, nous voulons, ils veulent*' is a pattern replicated over and over again (*pouvoir/peux, mourir/meurs, jetter/jette, lever/lève, appeler/appelle*, etc.). The same shift of vowel sound when stressed can be seen in nouns also, e.g. *la négresse/ le nègre.*

  Can we not approach this regularity as a treasure hunt, discussing the phenomenon in class and challenging pupils to collect further examples and classifying them according to the nature of the sound shift involved? Daykin (1973) reminded us: '*if no public explanation is given, learners will*

often form their own private explanation of the patterns they observe'. Jakobovits (1970) goes further:

> '*Rules that the child discovers are more important and carry greater weight than practice. Concept attainment and hypothesis testing are more likely paradigms in language development than response strength thorough rote memory and repetition.*'

We might add that this is even more important when teaching able learners. The grammar needs of able learners, who will want to speak (and write) the language at an advanced level, have sometimes been forgotten. It is on them that the nation will rely to meet its greatly expanding language needs in the 1990s, including the replenishment of its specialist teacher supply. The exploratory approach to grammar may help to motivate able learners and free them from the 'lock-step' of class teaching.

IMPORTANCE OF PUPIL FEEDBACK

- But this prompts a further question: Ought we not to encourage far more negotiation with the learners in our approach to grammar, regularly asking the learners to set the pace and the direction of the grammar syllabus, making the approach far more 'learner driven'?

  Again, the arrival of a new generation of 4th and 5th form learners, those who, though finding the going hard, are not permitted to drop out of their exploration of language, seems to call for sensitive negotiation of the degree and the nature of attention to the grammar. Should techniques for promoting learner 'feedback' and 'curiosity driven' exploration of grammar have a more prominent place in the initial and in-service training of teachers?

NEED FOR COLLABORATION IN BOTH 'HORIZONTAL' AND 'VERTICAL' CURRICULUM

- Lastly, to return to our cross-curricular perspective, the way ahead in the 90s foreign languages in the National Curriculum is bound to be hard. We shall need all the allies we can find. Somehow we must learn to co-operate with colleagues in English and other subjects to bring about what Rutherford calls 'grammatical consciousness raising'. I have seen this best done, both in the UK and in the work in Paris referred to above, through well planned programmes of awareness of language.

  Such programmes, taught by a team, can underpin that whole-school language policy that all recent national enquiries have called for. They can also help, if the programmes begin at the top of the primary school, to build a bridge across the 11+ gap, ensuring a smoother transition from the language of class teaching to that of secondary school specialisms. So though this conference discussion was most timely, for we have too long shunned discussion of grammar, I hope we may see this colloquium as a preliminary to a wider discussion with primary and secondary colleagues, of all subjects, with the aim of giving our pupils a less fragmented and haphazard apprenticeship in language in the National Curriculum and a preparation for the adventure into the foreign language which offers a more level playing field for all learners.

Appendix 1
Higher level writing

NEAB - GCSE in French - Marking criteria

At Higher level, the candidate's response to the two questions, which will be weighted 1:1, will be marked under each of the three categories used at Basic level for the less directed writing tasks. Under each of the three categories, candidates will be awarded 0, 1, 2, 3 or 4 marks according to the level of performance indicated below. Largely irrelevant answers will not be marked according to these criteria. The examiners will, under these circumstances, decide what, if any, credit can be given for the answer as a whole.

Content	0	Fails to demonstrate the qualities required for Higher level.
	1	Although there may be some omissions, the candidate is able to respond to the main tasks required and to cover essential points in the response.
	2	The candidate is able to elicit and convey relevant information in relation to all or almost all the tasks set. Although there may be obvious limitations in self-expression, the candidate shows the ability to go beyond a minimal level of response.
	3	The candidate is able to respond reasonably fully to the tasks set. Some ability to describe, give accounts, communicate attitudes and opinions will be demonstrated.
	4	The candidate is able to respond fully to all the tasks set, even though there may be minor omissions. The candidate has little difficulty in self-expression, is able to elaborate on points, to give full descriptions and accounts and to convey effectively attitudes and opinions.
Appropriateness of language	0	Fails to demonstrate the qualities required for Higher level.
	1	Although the language used is not wide in scope it is appropriate and sufficient to communicate essential points in relation to the task set.
	2	The language used is appropriate and goes beyond that required for a minimal response to the tasks set. The writing has some coherence and continuity.
	3	The language used produces a coherent response or account even though communication in places may be disjointed. The writing shows some variety of expression and a degree of refinement and precision appropriate to descriptions/accounts and the communication of attitudes and opinions.
	4	The language used is appropriate and effective. The writing shows both coherence and continuity. The degree of refinement and precision is such that descriptions and accounts are full and effective and attitudes and opinions clearly communicated.
Accuracy	0	Fails to demonstrate the qualities required for Higher level.
	1	Even though an effort of concentration on the part of the reader may be required, grammatical and lexical inaccuracies in the communication of essential points would rarely lead to misunderstanding of the main messages.
	2	Although inaccuracies are such that immediate comprehension may be delayed, essential points would be understood without difficulty.
	3	Inaccuracies are mainly of a minor nature and do not seriously interfere with the overall communication of the response/account.
	4	There are very few, if any, consistent or conspicuous grammatical or lexical inaccuracies. Where inaccuracies do occur, they may result from the candidate's use of an extended range of language to elaborate on given points.

The marks for the Higher-level questions will be totalled and, on the basis of the total marks scored, candidates awarded 0, 1, 2, 3 or 4 points for Higher-level writing.

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Appendix 2
IT and grammar

Pam Haezewindt

Background

Year: 7, Term 2

Unit of work: House, Home and Location (French)

Learners objectives: To seek and give information; to report and present information both orally and in writing.

Chosen grammatical focus: indefinite article (This has already been met and used extensively in Term 1 but has not had any emphasis laid upon it, primarily because it has been used with 'people' and the confusion arising from linking gender to people (*J'ai une soeur*) in the first instance is well known).

The following are a selection of differentiated language activities using IT which might be used within in any unit of work but which are here attached to the unit described above and in which is integrally and explicitly built some awareness raising of a particular grammatical point as a secondary objective.

Pre-communicative activities

1. Rearranging words within a sequence
   A program like *Word sequencing* (Camsoft) allows pupils to rearrange words into a coherent sentence and 'insists' that it is correct. By authoring it in such a way that some pupils can discover sequence and pattern in what they are doing we enable awareness of a 'system' to build up.

   Example: *Luc habite Etaples; c'est une ville.*
   Clare habite Guemps; c'est un village.
   Pierre habite Berck; c'est une petite ville. Etc
   Jean habite une maison à Merlimont, un village dans le nord de la France. Etc
   Anne habite un grand appartment à Rouen, une grande ville dans le nord. Etc

```
Pêle-Mêle
Remets les mots en bon ordre :-

habite un J' petite maison petit
nord sangatte, une le dans village à
```

2. Rearranging words to make a sentence
With a program like *My world* (SEMERC) the teacher can emphasise words by putting them in a box. This simply draws attention to a decision required on the part of the pupils as to which 'indefinite article' they use or more simply to the fact that there might be a decision to be made. (Note: there is no correction from the program - the pupils move the words around with the mouse to make sentences and print them out.)

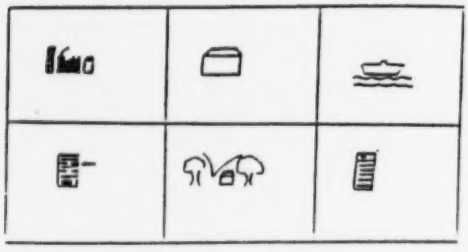
3. Fun with words using *Fun with texts* (Camsoft)
The relevant nouns from the unit are authored into the program and pupils 'discover' the gender using activities such as COPYWRITE EASY and CLOZEWRITE.

```
u-  v-----
u--   v----
u-  p---
u-  i--------
u-  a----------
u--   m-----
u-  j-----
u-  p------
u-  g-----
u--   p-----
u--   c-------
u-  s----
```

FUN WITH TEXTS

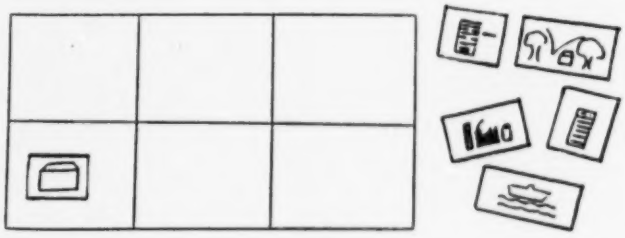
```
un village
---1--- ville
---2--- port
---3--- immeuble
---4--- appartement
---5--- maison
---6--- jardin
---7--- parking
---8--- garage
---9--- pièce
---10--- chambre
---11--- salon
```

4. Fun with words using the concept keyboard with *Concept match* (NCET).
Pupils read the message on screen and press the picture symbol on an overlay to match; the program checks and provides feedback.



5. Fun with words using the concept keyboard with *Touch explorer* (NCET)
   A blank overlay is provided and pupils
   - press a square, read the phrase and match the picture;
   - press a square, read the indefinite article and match the noun (in both cases, the teacher checks.)

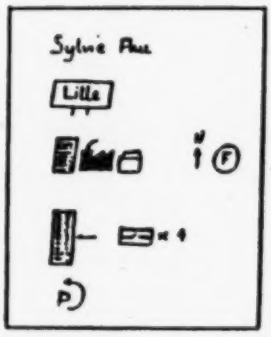
un village
une ville
un appartement
une maison
un port
un immeuble



une
un
un
une
un
un

6. Rearranging a report to match information seen (or heard)
   Using *Fun with texts* (Camsoft), the teacher authors the report such that the indefinite articles as far as possible appear at the end of the line, thus requiring the pupils to think about what comes next when rearranging the sequence of lines in the activity TEXTSALAD. The same report is then 'written' out using COPYWRITE EASY.

```
   Salut. Je m'appelle Sylvie Pau et
2  il y a quatres pièces dans
3  chambre à moi.
4  petit appartement dans un grand
5  j'habite Lille qui est une
6  cuisine et deux chambres. J'ai une
7  immeuble près du centre; il y a un
8  grande ville industrielle dans
9  l'appartement; un salon, une
10 avons une belle voiture, une Ford.
11 parking derrière l'immeuble. Nous
12 le nord de la France. J'habite un
```

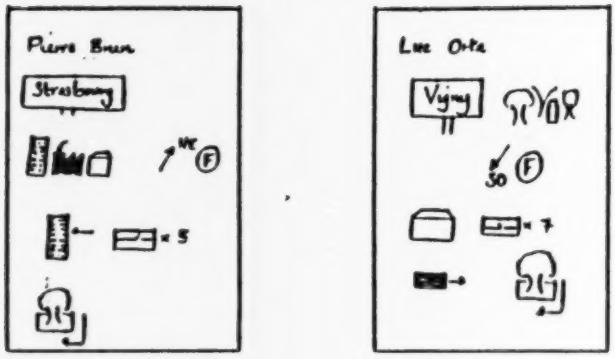


Fun With Texts
Cue card

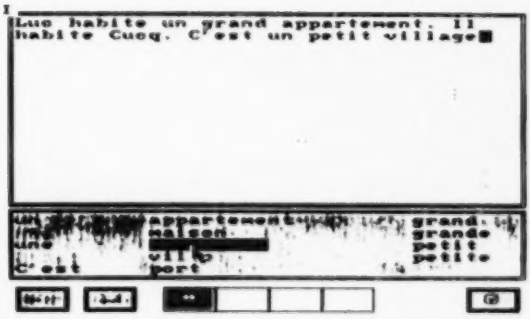
7. Discovering the text of a report using *ML developing tray* (ILECC)
   This program will allow the pupil to write the report, check progress, be given a clue and, if necessary, be helped on screen. The teacher may author it so that in the first place *un/une* appears on the screen but later on in the text it has to be discovered.

8a. Word processing a similar report according to different information (varying degrees of similarity depending on ability)
   Teacher checks progress in *un/une*.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE



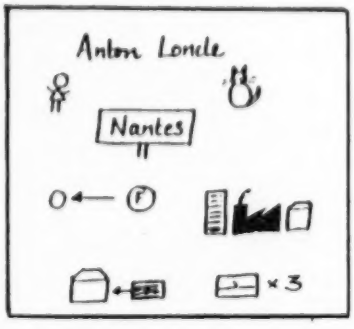
8b. Variation on the above using supported word processing
Pupils use pre-programmed word boxes to create a report.
Pupils use *Minnie* (MUSE) or *Clickword* (CECC) and lift words onto the screen with the mouse or use a word processor with a concept keyboard overlay and press the word boxes.



Sophie	Lille	ville	un
Paul	Cucq	port	une
Luc	Amiens	village	
Carole	Rouen	maison	
Sylvie	Marck	appartement	petite
André			petit
	Elle	habite	grande
C'est	Il	à	grand

9. Redrafting a report to match new information
Pupils can call up a report in the word processor and redraft it according to task. The indefinite articles in the original have been italicised or made bold so that the pupil's attention is directed to decisions that will need to be made.

Sonia Dupierre habite Nice qui est *un* grand port dans le sud-est de la France. Elle habite *une* petite maison dans la banlieue. Il y a *un* jardin derrière la maison. Il y a cinq pièces - *un* salon, *une* cuisine et trois chambres. Elle a *une* chambre à elle. Elle a *un* frère et aussi elle a *un* petit chien.



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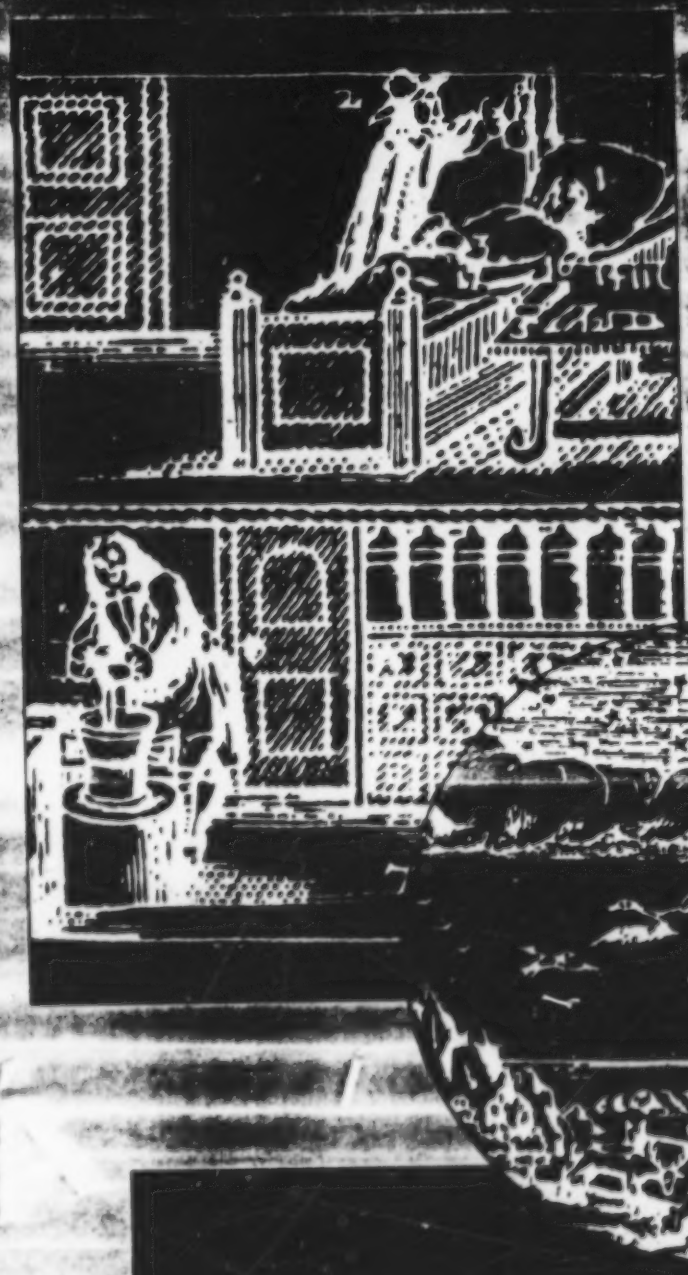

This report brings together the views of theorists and practitioners which emerged at the CILT conference. It takes the reader through the issues that were raised on the role of grammar in language teaching, the definitions of grammar which were offered, the approaches, solutions and problems outlined, and the relevance to the realities of the school curriculum.

In the first section Richard Johnstone and Brian Page examine the relationship between grammatical and communicative competence. The next section on 'Language acquisition and teaching strategies' brings together a variety of practical approaches by Bernardette Holmes, Barry Jones, James Burch and Geraint Hughes. The section on 'Developing grammatical understanding' raises a number of important issues: *How is 'grammatical awareness' developed? Can it be taught? Can 'grammar' be understood by all learners? Are there different grammars for different purposes?* etc. Then Mary Ryan attempts to answer the perennial question: *Yes, but what do we do on Monday?* Finally Eric Hawkins provides the historical background against which the current preoccupations have developed and, in doing so, helps to keep them in perspective.

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